RELIGION AND DEVELOPMENT

Towards a Sri Lankan Spirituality

WE CAN

TRANSFORM THE WORLD

Religion and Development

Towards a Sri Lankan Spirituality

Contents

Theme Song
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Preface

This booklet is an outcome of the training program on Religion and Development conducted for a group of clergy and laity by the (CIEF) in partnership with JLIFLC. The focus of the training was to gain knowledge about the importance of evidence based religious engagement in the changing landscapes of understanding and approaches to development, particularly based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to engage in the local context with evidence-based knowledge.

This book is divided into three sections, with an appendix that gives access to certain relevant and important resources. A few articles that served as resource materials for specific modules in the training program are included in Part 1. Section 2 consists of articles written by some of the participants. Section 3 includes some selected background reading materials recommended for the participants. Translations are easily accessible by scanning the respective QR codes. The articles in section 2 bring out simple evidence-based examples of some selected issues in Sri Lanka. These are short articles with the aim to encouraging a Sri Lankan spirituality of development. The articles by nature of their brevity are not comprehensive, but an invitation to further study, research and engagement. The email addresses of the authors are provided to encourage interested people/institutions to engage in constructive conversations towards study and action. The articles are personal reflections of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official stance of the Anglican Church in Sri Lanka. We hope that this compilation of articles and materials will be useful for a wider discussion on the linkages between Religion and Development.

We are grateful to Fr. Adrian Aaron, Director of CIEF for requesting us to coordinate the training program; Mr. Nagulan Nesiah for introducing the CIEF to the JLIFLC and this program, to Bishop Dushantha, the Bishop's and Diocesan office for their encouragement and support, the translators for a job well done, and Mr. Lakshman Gunasekera who advised the participants on their articles.

Rev. Andrew Devadason
Mr. Rohan Edrisinha
Course Coordinators

Part I

Setting the Space
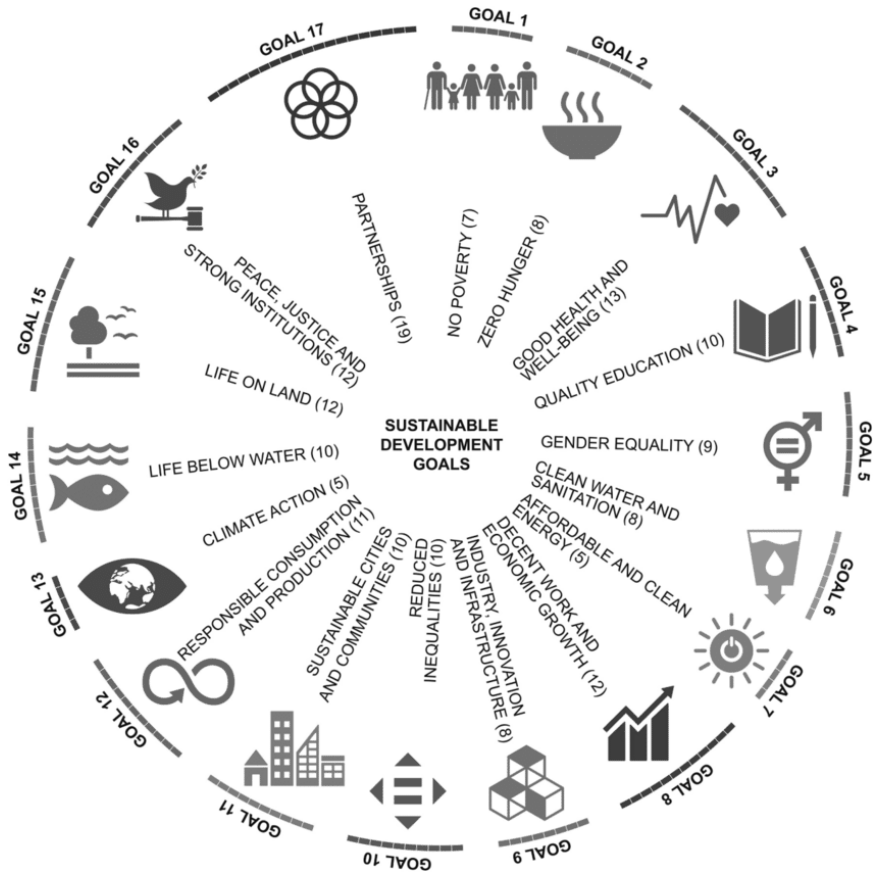
Indivisibility and Connectivity

Rev. Andrew Devadason

The focus of this brief article is not to provide a comprehensive explanation on the subject of development, rather to strongly place in the mind of the reader that the social, economic and political variables are indivisible in development. This brief article also draws close connections between the secular (UN) and Religious (WCC) mind on the subject of development. The common trajectory authenticates the call for joint action towards the transformation of the world.

A. What is Development?

The UN approach to development essentially being normative, stresses that indivisibility and universality as being "good" and as being supreme values in themselves. Which must be realized by all as individual citizens and as communities. Each element in development, health, education, democracy, economic wellbeing, and growth etc., all ends in themselves, which must be sought and enjoyed individually and collectively. One element cannot be enjoyed either at the expense of the other or in isolation. In fact, lack of progress in one element will retard the progress of the other. Therefore, the indivisibility of development makes development itself a right to be achieved. This is seen in the provisions of the UN charter of development, on the universal declaration of human rights, the international covenants on human rights and in the Vienna conference on Human Rights (1993) and the World Social Development Summit at Copenhagen (1995).

(Daily Mirror 24.05.2023)

The fundamental of UN charter on development was conditions of stability and well-being and ensuring a minimum standard of living with human dignity through economic and social progress and development. During the past six decades, it could be observed that the process of development in view of achieving the above goal has gone through different phases and focuses. This could be briefly stated as follows,

- 1960 -70 – Development as economic growth
- 1970-80 – Development as social progress targeting poverty and need-based approach
- 1980-1990 – People at the core and their participation – focus on women participation
- 1990-2000 – Development with a human face, beginning of rights-based approach
- 2000 – Millennium goals – sustainable development rights-based approach
- 2015 – Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

On the other hand, looking at human rights though the UN charter adopted in 1945 linked development, human rights, peace, and democracy in its mandate, operationally the countries linked human rights to civil and political rights and development to economic growth. "Development" and "Human rights" were seen from two different domains. It was mostly " Development" is a terrain for the "Economists" and the "Human Rights" is a terrain for " Human right activists" However, Mary Robinson, the UN high commissioner for human rights (2001) argues that the entry of newly independent southern nations into the system of United Nations in the 1960's and 70's that spurred the beginnings of attempts to bridge the two domains.[1] Therefore it could be said that the following international human rights covenants not only paved the way for "the declaration of right to development" in 1986 but also influenced the above evolution of "concepts" in the process of development in the past decades.

- 1965- convention against all forms of racial discrimination
- 1966- covenant on civil and political rights
- 1966- covenant on economic, social and cultural rights
- 1979- convention against all forms of discrimination against women
- 1984 – convention against torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- 1986 – declaration on the right to development.

Article 1 of the declaration on the Right to Development (RTD) sees it as a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and

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[1] Workshop on Rights Based Approach to Development, Dehradoon, New Delhi, India, 19-21st June 2006, CASA (Church' Auxiliary for Social Action)

political process. Its object is the constant improvement of the wellbeing of the entire population and of all individuals, based on their active, free, and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of the resulting benefits. The right to development is therefore integrated and multidisciplinary. Mary Robinson, stated in 2001 that "A rights-based approach is a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights.[2]

The Sri Lanka country study on RTD by Marga in June 2003 defines RTD as "the right to a progressive improvement in the state of well-being".[3]

B. Capability Approach in development economics

In this context it is useful to look at Amartya Sen's capability approach in brief. He in the 1990s began to make an important contribution to the analysis of poverty through his Capability Approach (CA). The traditional analysis looked at poverty as deprivation in income, consumption, expenditure but Sen proposed the capability approach which analyzed poverty in relation to deprivation in human capabilities such as knowledge, longevity and living standards, he created more emphasis on self-reporting, self-esteem, participation, and empowerment (Sen, 1999) In the capability approach, institutions such as the state are particularly relevant as mediators between economic

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[2] ibid

[3] MARGA -Part I (June 2003), "The Right to Development: The Sri Lankan Country Study", p. 107

growth and the conducive environment. <u>It is not about what an individual is, but what an individual could have been if those arrangements which Sen identifies as 'freedoms' were given</u> (Sen, 1999)

There are 05 important building blocks to the CA. Those are mainly 1) Commodities 2) Functionings   3) Capabilities 4) Conversion factors 5) Agency or choice. Commodities can be explained as the resources and competencies an individual can dispose of, but functionings are what the individual 'really do and are' due to the prevailing environment. Capabilities denote what an individual really "can do and can be". The functionings are the "ability" to do it. The potential transformation of commodities into functionings is mediated by the social structures in place. Within the CA, these structures are dealt with under the heading of conversion factors, and, occasionally, in discussions of choice/agency. Conversion factors are social structures in the widest possible sense. This is the environment in which commodities can be turned into functionings or cannot be turned into functionings.

Agency/Choice can be explained as the limitations in the environment in which the organizations cannot exercise their capabilities. Explained below, a concept of substantial freedom, which is important concerning the role and impact of religions in the social spectrum of the external environment.

In the capabilities approach special attention should be given to the interconnections between different types of substantial freedoms and the relative institutions involved. Substantial freedom, meaning the environment in which one's or a group's capabilities and functioning can be exercised to become what

they want to be. Deprivation of such freedoms becomes deprivation of one's capabilities and functionings. 05 types of instrumental freedom discussed below,

Political Freedoms
"The opportunities that people have to determine who should govern and on what principles, and also include the possibility to scrutinize and criticize authorities, to have freedom of political expression and an uncensored press, to enjoy the freedom to choose between different political parties, and so on. They include opportunities of political dialogue, dissent and critique as well as voting rights and participatory selection of legislators and executives" [4]

Economic facilities
The opportunities that individuals enjoy utilizing economic resources for the purpose of consumption, production, or exchange. The quantity of income as well as how it is distributed is important. Availability and access to finance are also crucial.

Social opportunities
Arrangements society makes for education, health care, etc.

Transparency guarantees.
These relate to the need for openness that people can anticipate; the freedom to deal with one another with a justified expectation of disclosure and clarity. These guarantees play a clear role in preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility, and violation of society's rules of conduct for government and business.

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[4] Jan Garrett, "Amartya Sen's Substantial freedom, shttp://www.wku.edu/~jan.garrett/ethics/senethic.htm

Protective security

A social safety net that prevents sections of the population from being reduced to abject misery. Sen refers to "fixed institutional arrangements such as unemployment benefits and statutory income supplements to the indigent as well as ad hoc (temporary) arrangements such as famine relief or emergency public employment to generate income for destitute."

Unfreedoms

Sen (1999) classifies that when such substantial freedom is not prevalent there exists 'Un freedoms' in relation to economic, social and political variables, one can affect the other. Substantial freedom as discussed earlier is an **environment** in which a person can translate the commodities into functionings. Such an environment must prevail over the 02 instruments that were identified above.

Therefore, development agendas must realize that any development program that deprives one's ability to become who S/he really can be, due to any or combination of 'unfreedoms' stated above is effectively anti-development.

C. Religious and Secular trajectories.

The creation platform paints a beautiful picture of perfect shalom in the garden of Eden. It was a perfect condition of economic justice, eco justice and social justice. However, after the entry of sin due to the disobedience of humans, stemming out of craving (*Thanha)*, this perfect system breaks down into chaos. The result was disparity, inequality and injustice. Therefore, the message of salvation in the bible is the re-gaining

of this lost garden of Eden. A perfect system change that culminates in the book of Revelations. Therefore, missio dei" (The mission of God), is the transformation of the world which becomes the mission of the people of God, the church.

The earlier discussion on the UN development decades clearly advocates holistic transformation. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for the "Transformation of the world.

Given below is how WCC thinking on *Diakonia* has progressed over the decades

WCC DIACONAL MILESTONES	MISSION	
DIAKOINIA (ACTS 6)	Comforting the victims	Social concern
PROPHETIC DIAKONIA (2010)	Comforting the Victims and Confronting the Victimizers	Prophetic Diakonia seeks not only to Comfort the victims but also to confront the powers of this world, which lead to violence, exclusion, death and destruction, and calls for the transformation of unjust structures and

		practices into God's kingdom of justice with fullness of life for all (St. John 10:10)
TRANSFORMATIONAL DIAKONIA FOR 21ST CENTURY (2012)	Comforting the Victims and Confronting the Victimizers and Transformation of both (Isaiah 65:17-25)	". For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places…" (Ephesians 6:12)
ECUMENICAL DIAKONIA AND ADVOCACY (2022)	Together comfort the victims, confront the victimizers towards transformation through advocacy,	Advocacy is emphasized
ECUMENICAL DIAKONIA AND SDGS (2024)	Absorbing SDGs in the overall diaconal mission	A holistic approach to Religion and Development

The point that needs to be grasped is the common grounds in which the secular and spiritual, if one may want to call it, operate towards the transformation of the world. It is simply the play of words than meaning. The UN refers to a holistic approach, meaning socio, economic and political progression while the spiritual language that we annotate is life in fullness. Empowerment and Transformation are common to both. The theological understanding of mission from the margins can be connected with the UN participatory approach.

The divergence of secular and spiritual.
However, we cannot deny that still there are areas that call the church for a unique mission, even being critical and challenging the SDGs in certain areas. Let me quote the following that emerged from the WCC, consultations on 'Transformational Diakonia for the 21st Century held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, of which I was a participant.

> *Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"*
> *(Jn.1:46) This critical question indicates the decisive*
> *entry point that God made for this mission when sending*
> *the Son into the world. Jesus announces his diakonia as*
> *one that liberates the oppressed, opens the eyes that are*
> *blind, and heals the sick. (Lk. 4: 16f) By asserting time*
> *and again that he has come to seek the lost and the least,*
> *Jesus constantly locates himself among the marginalized*
> *of his time. His diakonia rejects abusive power (Lk.4:1-*
> *12), refuses to be co-opted by the prevailing logic of*
> *power (Mk.10.45) and defies oppressive religious*
> *traditions (Lk.11:37-54). Instead, his diakonia opts to*

restore the ones who are denied life, even if these actions ultimately led him to the cross. [e.g. the man with the withered hand (Mk. 3:1-6)]. Through such an option, he exposes and confronts the forces of marginalization. To that extent, the margins are the privileged spaces for God's compassion and justice and of God's presence in vulnerability and resistance. Here the sick were healed, the domination of evil spirits broken, the dignity of the marginalized defended, and the disciples empowered with life-affirming values for ministry (Mission from the Margins", Transformational Diakonia for the 21st century)

A publication from the WCC and ACT alliance, titled, *Called to Transformation, Ecumenical Diakonia*, in 2022, draws attention to both convergence and divergence points (You can digitally take access to the document on the appendix section)

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(andrewdeva@gmail.com)

global challenges the world is facing. In addition, they are presented as global, with relevance both for the global North and the global South. The MDGs came into being at a time marked by the enthusiasm of entering a new millennium; as such they expressed the hope of initiating a new era. The context in which the SDGs were adopted was different, more characterized by political crises and pessimism. The MDGs were formulated by a few experts, whereas the SDGs were a result of a consultative process with a broad range of actors, including civil society and faith communities.

From a critical point of view, it may be claimed that the focus of the SDG agenda is too broad, containing too many goals and targets. When addressing issues such as poverty, it lacks an approach that analyzes root causes and questions ruling political and economic models. There is a glaring weakness in the SDGs, in that there is no reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). UNDRIP is essential understanding for all parts of the world. Diaconal ministry, economic development, missionary work worldwide. Resource extraction, land ownership and usage, and sustainable development are inextricably tied to Indigenous peoples' rights.

The SDG agenda – as a document resulting from a political compromise between governments – also has inbuilt tensions and unsolved contradictions with regard to a reconciled understanding of sustainability and economic growth. The SDG agenda does not satisfactorily answer the question what kind of growth is appropriate, ethically responsible for the future of the whole of humanity and reconcilable with the planetary boundaries, which have become more obvious than ever before. Therefore, there is a contradiction between the economic goals of the SDG agenda (No 1-11) and the ecological goals of the agenda (No 13-15). If the economic goals were to be achieved with an unaltered pattern of economic growth, the ecological goals could no longer be achieved at all. A proper recognition of the urgent need to reconcile economy, ecology and human civilization in a comprehensive effort towards both social and ecological *diakonia* is still at stake. Thus, the mandate and horizon of churches' public theological and social engagement reach much beyond the current SDG agenda. This engagement asks questions of the understanding of human dignity according to the gospel and of an alternative concept of growth which are not yet answered by this document of political compromise (which even now is questioned by several national governments). We should be reminded, and not lose the focus, that the ecumenical movement has provided an alternative to economic growth-oriented development. This alternative is based on justice, focusing on sustainable communities in which the prospering of human dignity – that protects human rights and the sustainability of the people – and the planet are the foci. It is this critical engagement with the SDG agenda which is part and parcel of prophetic *diakonia*, as has been also spelled out in the Religion and Development Strategy of ACT and WCC in the document produced for the Uppsala Assembly of ACT Alliance (October 2018).

The UN's SDGs are, for the most part, commendable goals for ecumenical *diakonia*. Some, in particular SDGs 8, 9, and 12, require careful scrutiny and are in danger of being used to continue the imposition of powerful economic interests in industrialised countries at the expense of our planet and many people who are already exploited. Nevertheless, the goals manifest the will of the global community to move in the direction of a sustainable world order and of fostering processes that will strengthen human rights and wellbeing.

Sustainable development is as much a process as a goal, leading to a life of dignity for people in relationship to the overall context of their community and the environment that sustains them. Development that isolates persons from part of themselves, from the community, or from the ecosystem which supports life, is not sustainable. As well, development of a local area that is not linked to the sustainability of the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the human family is likewise not sustainable.

Development is not a new concept for the ecumenical family. Churches and diaconal agencies have decades of experience on which to build. The WCC and other FBOs have been engaged in the areas that the SDGs address, long before the SDGs were formulated. The shift in discourse toward greater recognition of religion's role in develop-

State of the Evidence in Religions and Development

(Reproduced Chapter 1 with permission from Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities)

AUTHORS: OLIVIA WILKINSON, SUSANNA TROTTA, KATHERINE MARSHALL, EZRA CHITANDO, AND EMMA TOMALIN

Sinhala   **Tamil**

Setting the scene: The state of evidence in religions and development

This introduction orients readers to essential information in religions and development to avoid having to read through hundreds of other articles and reports. In essence, we have summarized the state of evidence in religions and development for practitioners and policy makers in what follows.

Why a "state of the evidence"?

As a joint learning network focused on evidence in religions and development, we (i.e., JLI) are often asked to summarize the "evidence" on religions and development. While that may seem like a simple request, it is, in fact, a complicated question due to the diversity of evidence in the wide-reaching area of religions, humanitarianism, development, and peace, which is the full scope of this report.

While JLI has published multiple scoping studies over the years,[5]

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[5] All JLI scoping studies can be found here: https://jliflc.com/about/learning-hubs/.

these studies were not meant to provide a complete picture of the "state of the evidence" in religions and development in one place. A state of the evidence in religions and development is needed, therefore, because:

- The amount of evidence for faith activity and contributions in the development and humanitarian spheres has increased over the last decade. It is increasingly difficult for newcomers to understand the breadth and depth of the evidence base, and for those already in the field to stay on top of new developments.

- There is a frequent demand from governments, international agencies, and international NGOs for evidence on religions and development, especially relating to examples of replicable and scalable projects with faith actors. It is commonly stated in meetings and consultations on religions and development that there is a need for more evidence. While further research is always needed, we believe that the perceived evidence gap is more about the accessibility and use of evidence rather than a lack of it. Providing a state of the evidence will allow policymakers and practitioners to understand more fully the breadth and depth of available information.

- There is an evidence imbalance. A balanced picture of the evidence is needed, including successes and failures, the positive and challenging aspects of faith engagement in religions and development, as well as a diversification of the evidence base. JLI is working to correct this evidence imbalance through its Fair and Equitable Initiative.[1]

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[1] Information on JLI's Fair and Equitable Initiative can be found here: https://jliflc.com/jli-fair-and-equitable-initiative/.

We aim to re-package, re-frame, and add to our previous evidence work to make it concise, accessible, and available in one place. A "state of the evidence" is intended to give a summary overview of the reliable evidence in our field to provide an insight into major debates and themes without the need for deep dives. It is akin to a "state of the art" in that we will cover the latest developments in the field, but we use the term "state of the evidence" to also convey that we will provide some history on the evidence base and contextual understanding of how stakeholders in religions and development have used (or not) the evidence.

The JLI will update the state of the evidence every two years to keep it current. We do not claim that this report comprehensively cites every article or report relevant to religions and development, but we do highlight the major papers that are shaping the field and trends for the future of the field.

What is "evidence"?

Defining "evidence" is difficult as there can be many different sources and standards for what counts as good evidence and what should be included in an evidence base. Some may cite randomized control trials as the "gold standard" for evidence, but these are expensive and not common in religions and development research (they have also been criticized for other reasons).[2] Others may see that peer-reviewed journal articles are the standard for evidence, but much of the research on

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[2] Angus Deaton and Nancy Cartwright, "Understanding and Misunderstanding Randomized Controlled Trials," Working Paper, Working Paper Series (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, September 2016), https://doi.org/10.3386/w22595.

religions and development has been published as grey literature (e.g., NGO research reports) and uses equally valid and reliable methodologies. Multiple experts often review these reports before publications. There are also debates about the methods used, with disagreements about the comparable validity of qualitative and quantitative methods.

The JLI therefore understands evidence and research as follows, recognizing that there are interlinkages and overlaps between these categories and widespread fuzziness regarding the use of language:

- **Evidence** is the overarching umbrella term that encompasses all "the available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid."[3] For JLI's purposes, evidence is all the information available on religious beliefs and practices as they relate to humanitarian and development work - this is the evidence base. ʃ **Research evidence** is rigorous, explains its methods, and undergoes review. As the Alliance for Useful Evidence states, "the conduct and publication of research involves documentation of methods, peer review and external scrutiny. These features contribute to its systematic nature, and they provide a means to judge trustworthiness of findings."[4] Research evidence can use many different quantitative and qualitative methods, but researchers must explain the methods they have used so that there is the possibility to replicate the study and test the results the research puts forward.

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[3] *Oxford English Dictionary,* s.v. "evidence."

[4] Sandra Margaret Nutley, Alison Elizabeth Powell, and Huw Talfryn Oakley Davies, "What Counts as Good Evidence," Report (London: Alliance for Useful Evidence, February 2013), 6, https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/handle/10023/3518.

- According to the Standards of Evidence[5] from the Alliance for Useful Evidence, some evidence will be stronger than other types of evidence, i.e., research evidence, particularly evidence that uses randomized samples and has control groups (randomized control trials). The evidence hierarchy tends to privilege some groups (not least those with finance and expertise to achieve higher standards of evidence), potentially unfairly disadvantaging organizations with a strong impact but inability to demonstrate it according to the standards of evidence.

- In humanitarian and development sectors, "evidence of impact" is seen as a gold standard of a sort. Researchers can use evidence of impact to refer to evidence that demonstrates causality (e.g., the direct result of a development intervention can be demonstrated as a significant percentage change in a community's behavior or practices) and comes from randomized samples and control groups. However, "impact" is also understood in a wide variety of ways that can lead to confusion.[6] For us, "evidence of impact" refers to the demonstration of causality from a development intervention to change, but "impact" can more broadly refer to any long-term effect of development work.

What this "state of the evidence" will not offer

If you are seeking the definitive piece of evidence that ultimately proves or disproves whether religions are necessary or important for development, you will not find it in this report. No

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[5] Ruth Puttick and Joe Ludlow, "Standards of Evidence: An Approach That Balances the Need For Evidence With Innovation" (London: Nesta, October 2013), https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/standards_of_evidence.pdf.

[6] Simon Hearn, "What Do We Mean by 'Impact'?," Research to Action (blog), February 18, 2016, https://www.researchtoaction.org/2016/02/what-do-wemean-by-impact/.

such evidence exists – no statistic proves religions are conclusively, always, and everywhere, either more or less effective in development interventions. The state of the evidence in this field demonstrates the complexity of religions around the world. Even the application of randomized control trials can only show how religion works in development in a specific place or in a handful of places. The evidence base shows the diversity of religions in development with the evidence base established through many multiples of context-specific examples, from which we can observe key trends.

What is "religions and development"?

- We use the term religions to refer to all religious (reference to a divine, transcendent, or spiritual concept) beliefs and practices that can form, influence, and hinder social transformation. We use "religions" in the plural because we are referring to the multiple and different types of religious beliefs and practices that people hold and participate in, in countries and cultures around the world.[7] We understand that religions are not monolithic, nor are they static, but religious beliefs and practices change over time and are embedded in their context.[8] Likewise, there are many forms of religious beliefs and practices that do not have overarching institutions and therefore do not fit into a concept of "religion" as large-scale religious institutions alone. Religions and development studies, for example, have only scantly addressed indigenous/traditional "religions."

[7] Emma Tomalin, Religions and Development 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 2013).

[8] Diane Moore, "Our Method: Religious Literacy Project," Religious Literacy Project (Cambridge: Harvard Divinity School, 2015), https://rlp.hds.harvard. edu/files/hds-rlp/files/rlp_method_2015.pdf.

- Frequently, people use the term **"faith"** interchangeably, e.g., for faith-based organizations, faith communities, or faith leaders, or to refer to spiritual traditions that are not as institutionalized as "religions." Actors in the development sector use the term "faith" again as an umbrella term to refer to anything related to religions. It is not wrong to use the term "faith," but we refer to the religions and development evidence base because, in research and academia, religions and religious beliefs and practices are the more widely used and appropriate terminology. We use the term "faith" to refer to faith actors because it is broad enough to encompass a wide of range of actors and does not limit us to religious institutions alone. We offer a typology of faith actors in a later section.

- We use the term **"development"** as shorthand for all the socially oriented work that religions might undertake to improve or protect human dignity, society, and wellbeing. In the language of international affairs, the evidence base spans broad thematic areas including humanitarianism and peace. More fully, we could call it the religions, humanitarianism, development, and peace evidence base, but that is lengthy. From the perspective of faith actors themselves, it might be truer to call it the "religions and community transformation" or the "religions and social change or social justice" evidence base, because faith actors tend to frame their work in more holistic ways than according to the silos of humanitarianism, development, and peace. The religions and development evidence base spans many types of activity and topics of debate, for example, increasingly including action on climate change. The rest of this report includes overviews of religions

and development as they relate to key thematic areas, from children to gender, to refugees.

What are the main publications from over the last 20 years of religions and development evidence and what do they tell us?

Focused attention given to religions and development evidence during certain periods

Several articles trace the history of the religions and development evidence base over the last 20 years or so.[9][10] This section provides a summary of major publications that mark the field's progression.

Pre-2000: Avoiding/ignoring religions in development.

- We use the last 20 years as our time marker because that is when most religions and development evidence was published, but it is also useful to include some information on what happened before then. Very little was written or researched specifically about religions and development until the early 2000s. A special issue of *World Development* in 1980 was ahead of its time; there, Denis Goulet referred to development experts as "one-

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[9] Séverine Deneulin and Carole Rakodi, "Revisiting Religion: Development Studies Thirty Years On," World Development 39, no. 1 (January 2011):

[10] –54, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2010.05.007; Elsabé Nell and Ignatius Swart, "Religion and Development: The Rise of a Bibliography,"
HTS : *Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (January 1, 2016): 1–27, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3862; Barbara Bompani, "Religion and Development:
Tracing the Trajectories of an Evolving Sub-Discipline," *Progress in Development Studies* 19, no. 3 (April 3, 2019), 1464993419829598, https://doi. org/10.1177/1464993419829598; Katherine Marshall, "Impressions & Indications of Religious Engagement in Development," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19, no. sup1 (November 1, 2021): 12–30, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2021.1983358; Katherine Marshall et al., "Religious Engagement in Development: What Impact Does It Have?," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19, no. sup1 (November 1, 2021): 42–62, https:// doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2021.1983347.

eyed giants,"[11] suggesting inter alia their ignorance of religious influences. An article from Ver Beek[12] in 2000 marks the start of more publishing in this area. Ver Beek analyzed prominent development journals from 1982-1998 and found that there were no religion-focused articles in any journals during that time, except for the 1980 special issue.

While the 80s and 90s were largely devoid of religions and development publications, there were some indications that religion was beginning to become a topic of interest for international affairs. In the 90s, examples such as Huntington's much critiqued argument about the Clash of Civilizations[13] and the publication of "Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft" [14] alerted those in international affairs to the "religions" gap. The events of 9/11 marked a paradigm shift, largely towards a securitized focus on religion and discussions of countering and preventing violent extremism, with a subsequent upswing in the amount of research and number of publications on that topic.[15]

2000-2010: Making the case that development should pay attention to religions

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[11] Denis Goulet, "Development Experts: The One-Eyed Giants," *World Development* 8, no. 7 (July 1, 1980): 481–89, https://doi.org/10.1016/0305750X(80)90033-9.

[12] Kurt Alan Ver Beek, "Spirituality: A Development Taboo," *Development in Practice* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2000): 31–43, https://doi.org/10.1080/09614520052484.

[13] Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1993): 22–49.

[14] Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson, eds., *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*, 1st ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[15] Jeffrey Haynes, "Religion and International Relations: What Do We Know and How Do We Know It?," *Religions* 12, no. 5 (May 2021): 328, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12050328.

- As documented by Nell and Swart's bibliography of religion and development publications, more research started to be published around 1999-2000 and the number of publications have grown year on year since then.[16] In Bompani's analysis of publications in the field, she states that "it is clear that 2005 and 2006 are the years in which, given the rise in the number of publications and the debates sparked, we can really discern the establishment of the sub-discipline [of religions and development]."[17]

- Markers around 2000 include the Voices of the Poor studies from the World Bank that asked over 60,000 people in 23 countries about their experiences of poverty and noted the roles of religious institutions, trust for religious leaders, religious coping mechanisms such as prayer, and social groups within religious institutions.[18] While the research demonstrated that religion was an important factor in people's lives, it also underlined that religious institutions can be "limited" and "non-inclusive."[19] The World Bank also published the 2003 book, "Faith in Conservation," which explored how religious perspectives could help shape environmental policy,[19] in connection with the work of the

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[16] Nell and Swart, *Religion and Development*.

[17] Bompani, *Religion and Development*, 172.

[18] Deepa Narayan et al., Can Anyone Hear Us? *Voices from 47 Countries, Voices of the Poor* 1 (Washington, D.C: World Bank, 1999), https:// wellcomecollection.org/works/ktts4ekt; Deepa Narayan et al., *Crying Out for Change, Voices of the Poor* 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc. for the World Bank, 2000),https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/13848; Deepa Narayan and Patti Petesch, eds., *From Many Lands*, Voices of the Poor 3 (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc. for the World Bank, 2002), http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPOVERTY/ Resources/335642-1124115102975/1555199-1124115210798/full.pdf. 19 Narayan and Petesch, *From Many Lands.*

[19] Martin Palmer and Victoria Finlay, "Faith in Conservation: New Approaches to Religions and the Environment" (Washington, DC: World Bank, August 2003), https://doi.org/10.1596/0-8213-5559-7.

Alliance for Religions and Conservation to bring the major world religions together to understand how they could work on environmental issues.

- In 2000, Appleby's "The Ambivalence of the Sacred"[20] made the case for understanding the diversity of religious dynamics – there is a full spectrum of potentially positive, negative, and neutral influences of religions. This nuanced point is still reiterated over 20 years later and makes this book a foundational text for many.

- Between 2000 and 2010, several major projects and activities resulted in a fuller base of evidence in religions and development, with case study examples from around the world. Notable projects include:

- Emerging from work at the end of the 90s and into the early 00s, the World Bank's religions and development work led to the formation of the World Faiths Development Dialogue. Early publications from this group include two major works in the 00s: "Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight Against Poverty"[21] and "Development and Faith: Where Mind, Heart, and Soul Work Together."[22] Both works offer numerous examples from around the world of religions in development projects, from the World Bank's engagement with the Jubilee 2000 Debt Campaign[23] to Sarvodaya's Buddhist approach to tsunami

[20] R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

[21] Katherine Marshall and Lucy Keough, *Mind, Heart, and Soul in the Fight against Poverty* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2004), https://openknowledge. worldbank.org/handle/10986/14927.

[22] Katherine Marshall and Marisa Bronwyn Van Saanen, *Development and Faith: Where Mind, Heart, and Soul Work Together* (Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2007).

[23] Marshall and Keough, *Mind, Heart, and Soul*, 35.

response and development in Sri Lanka.[24] They demonstrated the widespread nature of religions and development work and how religious influence can be found in every sector of development work.

- The UK's then-Department of International Development (DfID) funded the University of Birmingham to conduct a project on Religions and Development (2005-2010). This project resulted in a large number of working papers[25] and journal articles, with a special double issue in the journal *Development in Practice* devoted to religions and development.[27] A 2009 book "Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script"[26] argues for the idea that "religion is not to be considered only as a significant force in development – the position adopted in the existing development studies literature – but has to be engaged with in its entirety and not only to the extent that it is conducive or detrimental to pre-defined development goals."[27]

2010-present: Challenging and exploring the complexity of religions in development

- In the 2010s, publications increased considerably. Several edited volumes and special issues in academic journals laid out the shape of religions and development work more concretely by bringing different authors together and

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[24] Marshall and Saanen, *Development and Faith*, 117.

[25] See UK Government, "Research for Development Outputs," https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs?keywords=religions%20and%20development&research_document_type%5B%5D=working_paper&first_published_at%5Bfrom%5D=2004&first_published_at%5Bto%5D=2012 27 See *Development in Practice 22*, no. 5-6 (2021), https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cdip20/22/5-6.

[26] Séverine Deneulin and Masooda Bano, *Religion in Development: Rewriting the Secular Script* (London: Zed, 2009).

[27] Deneulin and Bano, *Religion in Development*, 6.

demonstrating the types of research and thinking that added to knowledge. They also demonstrate the growing range of scholars able to publish in this field and the variety of topics that can be tackled. Annex 1 lists edited volumes, special issues, and country studies/case studies on religions and development since 2010.

- To take "The Routledge Handbook on Religions and Global Development"[28] as a good example, the handbook approaches a diverse number of topics including research methodologies most appropriate to examine religions and development, religions and development in broader development theory, religions across different development goals from education to health, and religions in development in major world regions from Latin America to Southeast Asia. Efforts have also aimed to provide a landscape of religions and development at country level. Notably, the World Faiths Development Dialogue has a series of country papers that have provided contextual information for Bangladesh, Cambodia, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tanzania. ƒ with the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, much research started to investigate both how faith actors were (and were not)[29] involved in the consultations leading up to the formalization of the goals and

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[28] Emma Tomalin, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development* (London: Routledge, 2015), https://www.routledge.com/The-RoutledgeHandbook-of-Religions-and-Global-Development/Tomalin/p/book/9780415836364.

[29] Emma Tomalin, Jörg Haustein, and Shabaana Kidy, "Religion and the Sustainable Development Goals," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 17, no. 2
(April 3, 2019): 102–18, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2019.1608664; Emma Tomalin and Jörg Haustein, "Religion, Populism, and the Politics of the Sustainable Development Goals," *Social Policy and Society* 20, no. 2 (2021): 296-309.social, political, and economic factor in many official development assistance (ODA

how faith actors were beginning to use the framework of the goals to shape their work.[30]

- Scholars in the field started to take a more critical approach, contesting the state of the evidence as driven by either development or faith-based agendas. Jones & Petersen's 2011 article "Instrumental, Narrow, Normative"[31] has become a particularly well-known article and summarizes many of the current frustrations with religious engagement in development. They make the case that the literature on religions and development up until then had been

1. instrumental in its interest "in understanding how religion can be used to do development 'better',"

2. narrow in that it had a "focus on faith-based organizations, which is in many ways a consequence of the need to understand religion instrumentally," and

3. normative in that it makes normative assumptions about religion as "apart from 'mainstream' development" and development as "that thing that development agencies do." The critique is that development organizations' interests and agendas had driven some of the evidence building.

    - Likewise, a later critique of the evidence base focused on what was seen as an undue focus on faith-based organizations' interests to promote religious engagement in development. Olivier noted that there had been a rush

[30] Emmanuel Adelekan Ojewunmi and Akeem Amodu, "Sustainable Development Goals and the Baptist Convention in Nigeria: A Critical Overview," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 5, no. 8 (August 2021), https://www.rsisinternational.org/virtual-library/papers/ sustainable-development-goals-and-the-baptist-convention-in-nigeria-a-critical-overview/; Mohd Ma'Sum Billah, *Islamic Wealth and the SDGs: Global Strategies for Socio-Economic Impact* (Cham: Springer Nature, 2021).

[31] Ben Jones and Marie Juul Petersen, "Instrumental, Narrow, Normative? Reviewing Recent Work on Religion and Development," *Third World Quarterly* 32, no. 7 (August 1, 2011): 1291–1306, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2011.596747.

to advocacy about religions in development from faith-based organizations that was, in fact, based unduly on the limited evidence then available.[32]

There are now several university centers that work on topics of religions and development, such as the Unit for Religion and Development Research at Stellenbosch University, the World Faiths Development Dialogue at Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, Georgetown University, the Centre for Religion and Public Life at the University of Leeds, the Centre for Religion, Conflict and Globalization at the University of Groningen, and the Religion and Public Life program at Harvard Divinity School looks into religious literacy and humanitarianism. Likewise, research groups such as the JLI add to the evidence base in this field and work with university centers on research efforts.

Major themes emerging from the evidence over the last 20 years

- Religions matter and faith actors have important assets. A major line of argumentation in the first years of religions and development evidence was that "religion matters" – arguments made the case that religions should not be ignored in development and that religions had a vast array of advantages that should be recognized as aiding development overall.[33] Some commonly noted advantages

[32] Jill Olivier, "Hoist by Our Own Petard: Backing Slowly out of Religion and Development Advocacy," *HTS Theological Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1–11, https:// doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3564.

[33] For example, Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings, eds., *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, International Political Economy Series (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Gerard Clarke, "Faith Matters: Faith-Based Organizations, Civil Society and International Development," *Journal of International Development* 18, no. 6 (2006): 835–48; Wendy R. Tyndale, *Visions of Development: FaithBased Initiatives* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006); Bruno

of religions for humanitarian, development, and peace work include:

- Access and networks: In the Philippines, research found that national non-governmental organizations that worked closely with communities, particularly local faith actors with extensive networks and community cohesion roles throughout an affected area, had better access to areas considered off-limits either for reasons of security or because they were located some distance from access roads.[34] Access to areas off-limits to NGOs because of security offers a key advantage to local faith actors in South Sudan.[35] However, access cannot be assumed and information will not necessarily "cascade" through religious structures to hard-to-reach areas and populations.[36] Instead, it is important to understand how access and information flows in certain religious groupings and tailor programs appropriately.

- Trust and authority: The intangible qualities of trust and authority in communities is something external actors value

De Cordier, "Faith-Based Aid, Globalisation and the Humanitarian Frontline. An Operational Analysis of Western-Based Muslim Aid Organizations," *Disasters* 33, no. 4 (2009): 608–28; Gerrie Ter Haar and Stephen Ellis, "The Role of Religion in Development: Towards a New Relationship between the European Union and Africa," *The European Journal of Development Research* 18, no. 3 (September 1, 2006): 351–67, https://doi.org/10.1080/09578810600893403; Leah Selinger, "The Forgotten Factor: The Uneasy Relationship between Religion and Development," *Social Compass* 51, no. 4 (December 1, 2004): 523–43, https://doi.org/10.1177/0037768604047872; Jenny Lunn, "The Role of Religion, Spirituality and Faith in Development: A Critical Theory Approach," *Third World Quarterly* 30, no. 5 (2009): 937–51, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590902959180.

[34] Andy Featherstone, "Missed Again: Making Space for Partnership in the Typhoon Haiyan Response" (London: Christian Aid; CAFOD; Oxfam GB; Tearfund; Action Aid, 2014).

[35] Olivia Wilkinson et al., "Faith in Localisation? The Experiences of Local Faith Actors Engaging with the International Humanitarian System in South Sudan," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 7, no. 1 (January 11, 2022): 4, https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00113-8.

[36] Elisabet le Roux and Jill Olivier, "Cascading Theology: Experiences of the Implementation of a Training-of-the-Trainers Model for Faith-Based GenderBased Violence Intervention," in *International Development and Local Faith Actors: Ideological and Cultural Encounters,* ed. Kathryn Kraft and Olivia J Wilkinson (London: Routledge, 2020).

but hard to achieve within short timelines and histories of mistrust and exploitation from outsiders. Religious leaders are seen as trusted insiders and this trust and authority can lead to strong results when the aim is to change knowledge, attitudes, and practices on a topic. Surveys, such as those from Afrobarometer, demonstrate common widespread trust in religious leaders in certain countries and regions,[37] although others also note how understanding data on religious affiliation can be problematic in countries where censuses are politicized, for example.[38] Nevertheless, the influence of religious trust and authority was clear in Ebola response in 2014-2015,[39] where "exposure to religious leaders' messages was associated with a nearly twofold increase in the intention to accept safe alternatives to traditional burials"[40] and in decreasing vaccine hesitancy, such as in Northern Nigeria with polio,[41] and with randomized control trials showing effects of training and including religious leaders in childhood vaccines uptake[42]

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[37] Brian Howard, "Religion in Africa: Tolerance and Trust in Leaders Are High, but Many Would Allow Regulation of Religious Speech," Dispatches no. 339 (Afrobarometer, 2020), https://afrobarometer.org/publications/ad339-religion-africa-tolerance-and-trust-leaders-are-high-many-would-allow-regulation.

[38] Yonatan N. Gez, Nadia Beider, and Helga Dickow, "African and Not Religious: The State of Research on Sub-Saharan Religious Nones and New Scholarly Horizons," Africa Spectrum 57, no. 1 (April 1, 2022): 50–71, https://doi.org/10.1177/00020397211052567.

[39] Andy Featherstone, "Keeping the Faith: The Role of Faith Leaders in the Ebola Response" (London: Christian Aid; CAFOD; Teddington: Tearfund; Birmingham: Islamic Relief Worldwide, 2015), http://jliflc.com/resources/keeping-the-faith-the-role-of-faith-leaders-in-the-ebola-response-full-report/.

[40] Padraig Lyons et al., "Engaging Religious Leaders to Promote Safe Burial Practices during the 2014–2016 Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak, Sierra Leone," Bulletin of the World Health Organization 99, no. 4 (April 1, 2021): 271–79, https://doi.org/10.2471/BLT.20.263202.

[41] Sani-Gwarzo Nasir et al., "From Intense Rejection to Advocacy: How Muslim Clerics Were Engaged in a Polio Eradication Initiative in Northern Nigeria," PLOS Medicine 11, no. 8 (2014): e1001687, https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001687.

[42] Angela Oyo-Ita et al., "Effects of Engaging Communities in Decision-Making and Action through Traditional and Religious Leaders on Vaccination Coverage in Cross River State, Nigeria: A Cluster-Randomised Control Trial," PLOS ONE 16, no. 4 (April 16, 2021): e0248236, https://doi.org/10.1371/ journal.pone.0248236.

and other health measures.[4344] However, a community's trust of a religious leader is not guaranteed. Some higher-level leaders are distanced from communities, religious leaders may selectively use their trusted position for some topics and not want to use it for others (e.g., family planning[45] or responses to sexual violence[46]) or there may be a history of mistrust for other reasons. It is crucial to know the dynamics of the religious landscape and which faith actors hold authority in different areas and on different topics.

- There is a secular bias/avoidance of religions. The literature speaks widely of the avoidance of religions in many humanitarian, development, and peace discussions, and an avoidance of faith actors, particularly those that are deemed too expressive in their faith identity, by international organizations. As Bompani puts it in her analysis of the religions and development evidence base, "it was repeatedly argued that the lingering secular, western, neoliberal biases in development thinking fostered an approach that neglected religion and tried to apply ill fitting,

[43] Jennifer A. Downs et al., "Educating Religious Leaders to Promote Uptake of Male Circumcision in Tanzania: A Cluster Randomised Trial," *The Lancet*

[44] , no. 10074 (March 18, 2017): 1124–32, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)32055-4; Lincoln Leehang Lau et al., "Exploring Trust in Religious Leaders and Institutions as a Mechanism for Improving Retention in Child Malnutrition Interventions in the Philippines: A Retrospective Cohort Study," BMJ Open 10, no. 9 (September 1, 2020): e036091, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-036091.

[45] Mohamed Yunus Rafiq et al., "'I Let Others Speak about Condoms:' Muslim Religious Leaders' Selective Engagement with an NGO-Led Family Planning Project in Rural Tanzania," *Social Science & Medicine* 293 (January 1, 2022): 114650, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114650.

[46] Elisabet le Roux and Laura Cadavid Valencia, "Partnering with Local Faith Communities: Learning from the Response to Internal Displacement and Sexual Violence in Colombia," in *International Development and Local Faith Actors: Ideological and Cultural Encounters*, ed. Kathryn Kraft and Olivia J Wilkinson (London: Routledge, 2020).

ethnocentric concepts globally."[47] This topic has been much discussed in development[48] and somewhat discussed in humanitarianism, with a focus on how the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality have inadvertently fostered an avoidance of religions.[49] Studies show that, in fact, avoidance of religions makes humanitarians seem less impartial and neutral as it affects their knowledge of a context.[50]

- Instrumentalization. This term is often repeated in debates on religions and development. It refers to the observation that development actors can "use" faith actors to meet

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[47] Bompani, *Religion and Development*, 173.

[48] Clarke and Jennings, *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations*; Ingie Hovland, "Who's Afraid of Religion? Tensions between 'Mission' and 'Development' in the Norwegian Mission Society.," in *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, ed. Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 171–86; Deneulin and Bano, *Religion in Development*; Andrea Paras, "CIDA's Secular Fiction and Canadian Faith-Based Organizations," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement* 33, no. 2 (2012): 231–49, https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2012.689253; Gilles Carbonnier, "Religion and Development: Reconsidering Secularism as the Norm," *International Development Policy | Revue Internationale de Politique de Développement*, no. 4 (March 1, 2013): 1–5, https://doi.org/10.4000/ poldev.1351; Elisabet le Roux and Lizle Loots, "The Unhealthy Divide: How the Secular-Faith Binary Potentially Limits GBV Prevention and Response," *Development in Practice* 27, no. 5 (July 4, 2017): 733–44, https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2017.1327023; Brenda E. Bartelink and Ton Groeneweg, "Advocating the Value-Add of Faith in a Secular Context: The Case of the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development in the Netherlands," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 75, no. 4 (December 11, 2019): 9, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i4.5510.

[49] Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, "Faith and the Discourse of Secular Humanitarianism," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 24, no. 3 (2011): 456–72; Alastair Ager and Joey Ager, *Faith, Secularism, and Humanitarian Engagement: Finding the Place of Religion in the Support of Displaced Communities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Olivia Wilkinson, *Secular and Religious Dynamics in Humanitarian Response* (New York: Routledge, 2019), https://www.routledge.com/ Secular-and-Religious-Dynamics-in-Humanitarian-Response-1st-Edition/Wilkinson/p/book/9780367188337.

[50] Olivia Wilkinson, "'As Local as Possible, as International as Necessary': Investigating the Place of Religious and Faith-Based Actors in the Localization of the International Humanitarian System," in *Routledge International Handbook of Religion in Global Society*, ed. Jayeel et al. (London: Routledge, 2020); Nusrat Jahan Mim, "Religion at the Margins: Resistance to Secular Humanitarianism at the Rohingya Refugee Camps in Bangladesh," *Religions* 11, no. 8 (August 2020): 423, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080423.

their goals or push their agendas.[51] This happens when development actors do not work with faith actors as equal partners in developing goals and agendas.[52] It is apparent in processes of subcontracting faith actors to implement pre-defined work rather than partnering with them to develop projects. Similar arguments have been made in localization debates in terms of international actors working with local actors.[53] Development actors are interested in faith actors because of faith actors' assets (e.g., their infrastructure, their human resources in forms of large volunteer networks, their influence in communities) and essentialize "religion" as a solution to a development problem.[54] However, this can lead to fatigue, burnout, and an unwillingness from faith actors to engage with international actors again.[55]

- Defining faith-based organizations (FBOs). The 2000-2010 period often saw efforts to sort organizations and types of religious denominations into categories and typologies[56]

[51] Jones and Petersen, *Instrumental, Narrow, Normative*?; Gerard Clarke, "Agents of Transformation? Donors, Faith-Based Organizations and International Development," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 77–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590601081880.

[52] Jonathan Wiles and Nathan Mallonee, "Mobilisation towards What? Moving beyond an Instrumental View of Local Faith Actors in WASH Programmes," in *International Development and Local Faith Actors: Ideological and Cultural Encounters*, ed. Kathryn Kraft and Olivia J Wilkinson (London: Routledge, 2020).

[53] Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, "The Localisation of Aid and Southern-Led Responses to Displacement: Beyond Instrumentalising Local Actors," *Southern Responses to Displacement* (blog), July 16, 2018, https://southernresponses.org/2018/07/16/the-localisation-of-aid-and-southern-led-responses-todisplacement-beyond-instrumentalising-local-actors/.

[54] Cassandra Balchin, "Religion and Development: A Practitioner's Perspective on Instrumentalisation," *IDS Bulletin* 42, no. 1 (2011): 15–20, https://doi. org/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2011.00196.x.

[55] Olivia Wilkinson and Joey Ager, "Scoping Study on Local Faith Communities in Urban Displacement: Evidence on Localisation and Urbanisation" (Washington, D.C.: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, 2017): 21; Roux and Valencia, *Partnering with Local Faith Communities*, 246.

[56] Julia Berger, "Religious Nongovernmental Organizations: An Exploratory Analysis," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 14, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 15–39,

and to run through world religions to analyze what each one might have to say about development.[57] Typologies of faith actors are discussed in the next section. While it is important to understand all the types of actors that can be described as linked to "faith," publications focused on typologies are less frequent now. These typologies were written early in the field's development when more definitional work was needed about what constitutes a faith-based organization. We should not forget that religious influence has been present in development throughout its history. Many articles and books highlight the pros and cons of the work of missionaries at the start of international development and humanitarian activities.[58] In the "quiet" period between World War II and the 90s where religions were not widely spoken of in development, large faith-based organizations were founded and grew, wrestling with their religious identity continuously throughout these decades. Some recent histories of FBOs reveal more about the shaping of religious identity and practice within FBOs,

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https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022988804887; Clarke, *Faith Matters*; Carlo Benedetti, "Islamic and Christian Inspired NGOs: Between Tactical Collaboration and Strategic Diffidence?," *Journal of International Development* 18 (2006): 849–59; Tamsin Bradley, "A Call for Clarification and Critical Analysis of the Work of Faith-Based Development Organizations (FBDO)," *Progress in Development Studies* 9, no. 2 (April 1, 2009): 101–14, https://doi.org/10.1177/146499340800900202; Laura C. Thaut, "The Role of Faith in Christian Faith-Based Humanitarian Agencies: Constructing the Taxonomy," *Voluntas* 20, no.4 (2009): 319–50.

[57] Matthew Clarke, *Development and Religion: Theology and Practice* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011).

[58] Firoze Manji and Carl O'Coill, "The Missionary Position: NGOs and Development in Africa," *International Affairs* 78, no. 3 (July 1, 2002): 567–84, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.00267; Julie Hearn, "The 'Invisible' Ngo: US Evangelical Missions in Kenya," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 32, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 32–60, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700660260048465; Jonathan D. Smith, "Positioning Missionaries in Development Studies, Policy, and Practice," *World Development* 90 (February 1, 2017): 63–76, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2016.08.016; Catherine Scheer, Philip Fountain, and R. Michael Feener, *The Mission of Development: Religion and Techno-Politics in Asia* (BRILL, 2018), https://brill.com/view/title/35163.

including World Vision[59] and Tearfund,[60] demonstrating an increased interest in FBOs evaluating and stating their faith identity.

● **Major topics with the most evidence.** Some thematic areas have developed the most evidence over the years due to varying factors such as their prominence in global development trends, the influence of these trends on FBOs, and the amount of research funding available in that area. Religions as related to health and HIV/AIDS have strong evidence bases. While more will be covered on these topics in this state of the evidence's thematic sections, we highlight two review articles here that summarize much of the evidence in these fields:

● *Health:* Olivier et al. [61] published in *The Lancet* that while faith-based healthcare providers in sub-Saharan Africa are widespread, their prevalence is not as high as sometimes assumed, varies greatly by country and region, and shows promising results in patient satisfaction but weaknesses in integration and adaptation. They warn against making generalizations about faith-based healthcare providers, hence why we do not give a statistic on the percentage of faith-based healthcare providers among all providers

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[59] David P. King, *God's Internationalists: World Vision and the Age of Evangelical Humanitarianism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

[60] Dena Freeman, *Tearfund and the Quest for Faith-Based Development* (New York: Routledge, 2019), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429343322.

[61] Jill Olivier et al., "Understanding the Roles of Faith-Based Health-Care Providers in Africa: Review of the Evidence with a Focus on Magnitude, Reach, Cost, and Satisfaction," *The Lancet* 386, no. 10005 (October 31, 2015): 1765–75, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60251-3.

(which is a number often sought out and misquoted.)[62] The article does offer some estimated percentages for different countries in the region.

- From 2015 onwards, there was also an uptick in publishing on faith engagement in Ebola response.[63] The early response to Ebola in West Africa did not include faith actors, but towards the end of 2014 the need to work with faith actors on burial procedures and community engagement was acknowledged and processes changed, which had notable positive effects. Various groups have undertaken research to document and better understand faith engagement in this emergency health response.

- *HIV/AIDS:* Olivier and Smith summarize the evidence on faith and HIV/AIDS to show that there has indeed been a concerted faith-based response to HIV/AIDS with a clear trend from "the late 1990s, when there was a major surge in the quantity and scope of response"[64] but concluding that the surge had since stopped. They summarize that faith actors are involved in several innovative mechanisms for HIV response across advocacy and campaigning, community-based service delivery, community-based research, and community financing.

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[62] Jill Olivier and Quentin Wodon, "Playing Broken Telephone: Assessing Faith-Inspired Health Care Provision in Africa," *Development in Practice* 22, no. 5–6 (August 1, 2012): 819–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2012.685870.

[63] Featherstone, *Keeping the Faith*; Christo Greyling et al., "Lessons from the Faith-Driven Response to the West Africa Ebola Epidemic," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 14, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 118–23, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2016.1215829; Katherine Marshall, "Roles of Religious Actors in the West African Ebola Response," *Development in Practice* 27, no. 5 (July 4, 2017): 622–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2017.1327573; Lyons et al., *Safe Burial Practices.*

[64] Jill Olivier and Sally Smith, "Innovative Faith-Community Responses to HIV and AIDS: Summative Lessons from Over Two Decades of Work," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 14, no. 3 (July 2, 2016): 5–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2016.1215839.

- *Theological positions and human rights*. Some handbooks have offered chapters that summarize how theologies understood development, such as the Handbook of Research on Development and Religion,[65] which covered Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Daoist, Confucian, and African Traditional Religions approaches to development. Indeed, theologians debate poverty and injustice at length, making this area a field of its own and only sometimes relevant for the religions and development evidence base when it leans towards practical, rather than abstract, discussion. *The Ecumenical Review*[66] or *HTS Theological Studies*[67] are examples of journals that publish on theology but often also with practical articles that are relevant for religions and development. Evidence on theological debates and divides in development programming have emerged too. For some secular development organizations, the fact or perception that theological positions can overrule and or/be in contrast with human rights is one of the main obstacles in engaging with faith actors.[68] This is especially common with respect to gender, where there have been fears that the "religious turn" in development might affect the struggle for gender

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[65] Clarke, *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion*.

[66] For more information about *The Ecumenical Review*, see https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/17586623.

[67] For more information about *HTS Theological Studies,* see https://hts.org.za/.

[68] Michael Jennings, "'Do Not Turn Away a Poor Man': Faith-Based Organizations and Development," in *Handbook of Research on Development and Religion*, ed. Matthew Clarke (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013), 365, https://doi.org/10.4337/9780857933577.00029.

equity that had been building up for decades.[69] Scholars of religion argue that human rights and religions are not mutually exclusive and can be supportive of one another (also see section below on FoRB).[70] Likewise, there are well documented cases of faith actors being involved in social movements to advance issues of justice, such as the Jubilee campaign for debt cancellation.[71] Some evidence has also begun to show how faith based perspectives can effectively interpret rights-based approaches to humanitarian and development work.[72]f **Proselytism.** Faith actors have been perceived, and have at times acted, as proselytizing actors in humanitarian and development processes, offering conditional assistance in exchange for the chance to convert the recipient to their religion. This has hampered collaboration with other stakeholders, including donors,[73] who require assistance to be unconditional in line with principles of impartiality.[74] Yet, authors in this field have pointed out how complex the proselytization debate can be. For example, some argue that all aid is value laden

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[69] Ruth Pearson and Emma Tomalin, "Intelligent Design?: A Gender-Sensitive Interrogation of Religion and Development," in *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, ed. Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 46–71, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230371262_3.

[70] For example, Elizabeth M. Bucar and Barbra Barnett, eds., *Does Human Rights Need God?*, The Eerdmans Religion, Ethics, and Public Life Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Linda Hogan, *Keeping Faith with Human Rights* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015).

[71] Marshall and Keough, *Mind, Heart, and Soul.*

[72] Kaja Borchgrevink, "Negotiating Rights and Faith: A Study of Rights-Based Approaches to Humanitarian Action in Pakistan," *Disasters* n/a, no. n/a (March 8, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12480.

[73] Rick James, "Handle with Care: Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations in Development," *Development in Practice* 21, no. 1 (February 1, 2011): 109–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2011.530231.

[74] Philip Fountain, "Proselytizing Development," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*, ed. Emma Tomalin (London: Routledge, 2015), 80–83.

and there can be secular forms of proselytization just as much as religious.[75] Likewise, within religions there are different approaches from pro- to anti-proselytizing stances and a spectrum of options that also allow for a middle ground of "voluntary witnessing" (e.g., speaking of one's religion without tying assistance conditionally to recipients engaging in those religious beliefs or practices).[76] Finally, evidence has also shown how proselytism is just as much a contested area for local faith actors as it is for donors. For example, in Turkey, Muslim faith actors reportedly increased their engagement in education for displaced Syrian children to counter what they perceived as proselytism by Christian missions that would have led to "exploitation and assimilation by Western values."[77]ƒ **Faith and Finance.** Exploration of religious influence in economic history has recently seen a growing evidence base[78] and much of this intersects with development issues. Marshall identifies four major trends: "(a) new theoretical models that include spatial models of religious markets and evolutionary models of religious traits; (b) empirical work

[75] Fountain, *Proselytizing Development*; Cecelia Lynch and Tanya B. Schwarz, "Humanitarianism's Proselytism Problem," *International Studies Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (2016): 636–46, https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqw024.

[76] Emmanuel Awiah and Johan De Tavernier, "Dealing with Proselytism in Development Cooperation: A Rights-Based and Pluralistic Approach," *Journal of Church and State* 62, no. 3 (2020): 525–43, https://doi.org/10.1093/jcs/csz058.

[77] vVd_-m$;;V11-u|_kľomŊ"|-|;1|ouv-m771-|bom-v-l-mb|-ub-m!;vromv;Ĺ!oV;o=   -b|_Ŋ-v;7u]-mb-|bomvbm71-|bom=ou"ub-m Refugees in Turkey," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 2, no. 1 (November 13, 2017): 13, https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-017-0028-x.

[78] Sascha O. Becker, Jared Rubin, and Ludger Woessmann, "Religion in Economic History: A Survey," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester: Social Science Research Network, June 1, 2020), https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3628217."plainCitation":"Sascha O. Becker, Jared Rubin, and Ludger Woessmann, "Religion in Economic History: A Survey," SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, June 1, 2020

addressing causal influences on religious behavior; (c) examination of the economic history of religion taking religion as an independent, rather than a dependent, variable; and (d) studies of religion outside the Western world (where the great majority of current work has been concentrated)."[79] Some of the debate specific to religions and development has explored Islamic financing and there are increasingly articles making the case that Islamic social financing regularly assists in everything from "mitigating humanitarian crises"[80] to women's empowerment.[81] However, there is some skepticism about the interest in financial resources from faith actors,[82] in line with the instrumentalization argument above.

Some current trends in religions and development evidence
Trend 1: Localization, decolonization, and local faith actors

Broad discussions on localization of aid and decolonization of development are occurring alongside a shift away from an interest in evidence from international FBOs to evidence about and with local faith actors in the religions and development

[79] Katherine Marshall, "Religion and International Development," in *Handbook on Religion and International Relations*, ed. Jeffrey Haynes (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021): 207, https://www.elgaronline.com/view/edcoll/9781839100239/9781839100239.00021.xml.reflecting recognition that religion plays both positive and less positive roles. Religious engagement touches every facet of development work, from economic policies to health, education, and water, to protection of vulnerable communities. Evidence produced by various disciplines (economics, anthropology, political science, and psychology

[80] Mustafa Mahmoud Hamed, "The Role of Islamic Social Finance in Mitigating Humanitarian Crises: A Multi-Range Strategy to Mitigate COVID-19 Impacts," *European Journal of Islamic Finance*, no. 16 (December 31, 2020), https://doi.org/10.13135/2421-2172/4937.

[81] Ninik Sri Rahayu, "The Intersection of Islamic Microfinance and Women's Empowerment: A Case Study of Baitul Maal Wat Tamwil in Indonesia," *International Journal of Financial Studies* 8, no. 2 (2020): 1–13.women are the main beneficiaries of Baitul Maal Wat Tamwil (BMT

[82] Alliance of Religions and Conservation, "Faith in Finance: Faith-Consistent Investing and the Sustainable Development Goals" (Bath: ARC; UNDP; OECD, 2016), https://jliflc.com/resources/faith-and-finance/.

evidence base. Evidence on local, less formal engagements by faith actors is still quite fragmented and limited,[83] although several studies have addressed these issues in the last years. Such studies demonstrate local faith actors' crucial roles in peacebuilding in particular,[84] their ability to work with voluntary networks and access remote locations (as discussed above), the roles of social movements in volunteerism that respond to social issues,[85] and their connections to communities and role as first and last responders with an ability to fill social protection gaps.[86] Yet, studies also show local faith actors' continued marginalization from donor engagement, with some difficulties similar to other local actors, while others point specifically to their faith-affiliation,[87] amid their own concerns about the NGO-ization of their activities.[88]

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[83] Marshall et al., *What Impact Does It Have*.

[84] For example, Susan Hayward and Katherine Marshall, *Women, Religion, and Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2015); David Boan et al., "A Qualitative Study of an Indigenous Faith-Based Distributive Justice Program in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya," *Christian Journal for Global Health* 5, no. 2 (September 1, 2018): 3–20, https://doi.org/10.15566/cjgh.v5i2.215; Nell Bolton, "Interreligious Action for Peace: Studies in Muslim-Christian Cooperation," (Lexington: Catholic Relief Services, March 28, 2017), http://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/researchpublications/interreligious-action-peace; Susanna Trotta and Olivia Wilkinson, "Partnering with Local Faith Actors to Support Peaceful and Inclusive Societies" (Washington, DC: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities; Berlin: International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), 2019), https://jliflc.com/resources/peace-sdg-16-pard/; Olivia Wilkinson, Florine de Wolf, and Moses Alier, "The Triple Nexus and Local Faith Actors in South Sudan: Findings from Primary Research" (Copenhagen: DanChurchAid; Washington, DC: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, 2019), https://jliflc.com/resources/triple-nexus-lfas-south-sudan-primary-research-dca/.

[85] Arnold Lindros Lau and Jayeel Serrano Cornelio, "Tzu Chi and the Philanthropy of Filipino Volunteers," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 43, no. 4 (January 1, 2015): 376–99, https://doi.org/10.1163/15685314-04304004.

[86] Heather Wurtz and Olivia Wilkinson, "Local Faith Actors and the Global Compact on Refugees," *Migration and Society* 3, no. 1 (June 1, 2020): 145–61, https://doi.org/10.3167/arms.2020.030112.

[87] Shatha El Nakib and Alastair Ager, "Local Faith Community and Related Civil Society Engagement in Humanitarian Response with Syrian Refugees in Irbid, Jordan: Report to the Henry Luce Foundation" (New York: Columbia University, 2015), http://jliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/El-Nakib-AgerLocal-faith-communities-and-humanitarian-response-in-Irbid-.pdf; Olivia Wilkinson et al., "Bridge Builders: Strengthening the Role of Local Faith Actors in Humanitarian Response in South Sudan" (Islamic Relief;

In terms of decolonization, experiences, and perspectives of religious communities from the Global South can be key in re-framing notions of development, moving away from Western- and Northern-centric, towards more equitable approaches, and beyond functional, instrumental engagements of local faith actors.[89] Nevertheless, there remains a dominance of white, Western researchers in this field. Development Studies and Religious Studies in themselves are disciplines created by and for Western academic institutions. For example, the major "Development Studies" and "Humanitarian Studies" centers in universities are based in the Global North. The very concept of "religions and development" is not universally relevant. However, some academics from around the world are picking up on this field and re-interpreting it. Special issues on Asia focus on religious philanthropy[90] and disasters,[91] and other articles have argued for a reframing of how secular and religious notions of humanitarianism and development are employed in nonwestern contexts, such as Sri Lanka.[92] Recent handbooks

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Washington, DC: Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities, RedR UK, Tearfund, Tearfund Belgium, University of Leeds, 2020), https://jliflc.com/resources/bridge-builders-south-sudan/.

[88] Wilkinson et al., *Faith in Localisation?*

[89] Philipp Öhlmann, Wilhelm Gräb, and Marie-Luise Frost, *African Initiated Christianity, and the Decolonisation of Development: Sustainable Development in Pentecostal and Independent Churches* (London: Routledge, 2020), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780367823825.

[90] Khun Eng Kuah-Pearce and Jayeel Serrano Cornelio, "Introduction: Religious Philanthropy in Asia," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 43, no. 4 (2015): 349–55.

[91] Philip Fountain and Levi McLaughlin, "Salvage and Salvation: Guest Editors' Introduction," *Asian Ethnology* 75, no. 1 (2016): 1–28.

[92] Nalika Gajaweera, "Buddhist Cosmopolitan Ethics and Transnational Secular Humanitarianism in Sri Lanka," in *Religion and the Politics of Development*, ed Philip Fountain et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 105–28, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137438577_6.

from Africa[93] and Southern Africa[94] offer a range of critical interpretations of religions and development through theological, historical, economic, missiological, educational, feminist, and health perspectives. They deal with potentially contentious issues from xenophobia to LGBTIQ+ rights and broaden perspectives of what should be the evidence "story" of religions and development, demonstrating that many of the major themes examined above (e.g., defining FBOs, instrumentalization, proselytization) come from a particularly Western and donor-oriented lens of concern.

Trend 2: Faith-sensitive psychosocial support

Emerging as a distinct interest in the last five years or so, faith-sensitive psychosocial support has seen a growth in guidance documents,[95] online learning, systematic and literature reviews,[96] and original research.[97] Some other terms used include "trauma healing/awareness,"[98] "spiritual care,"[99] and

[93] Ezra Chitando, Masiiwa Ragies Gunda, and Lovemore Togarasei, *Religion and Development in Africa* (Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2020).

[94] James N. Amanze et al., *Religion and Development in Southern and Central Africa: Vol. 1* (Mzuni Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvx0785f; James N. Amanze et al., *Religion and Development in Southern and Central Africa: Vol. 2* (Mzuni Press, 2019), https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvx0783g.

[95] Michael French et al., "A Faith-Sensitive Approach in Humanitarian Response" (Islamic Relief Worldwide; Lutheran World Federation, June 2018), https:// refugee.jliflc.com/resources/a-faith-sensitive-approach-in-humanitarian-response/.

[96] Wendy Ager et al., "The Case for—and Challenges of—Faith-Sensitive Psychosocial Programming," *Intervention* 17, no. 1 (January 1, 2019): 69, https://doi. org/10.4103/INTV.INTV_20_18; Jamie D. Aten et al., "The Psychological Study of Religion and Spirituality in a Disaster Context: A Systematic Review," *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy* 11 no. 6 (February 2019): 597-613, doi: 10.1037/tra0000431; Leonie Harsch, Corrie van der Ven, and Olivia Wilkinson, "*Faith-Sensitive MHPSS for Humanitarian Practitioners,*" Forced Migration Review 66 (March 2021), https://www.fmreview.org/issue66/ harsch-vanderven-wilkinson.

[97] Kathleen Rutledge et al., "Faith and MHPSS among Displaced Muslim Women," *Forced Migration Review* 66 (March 2021), https://www.fmreview.org/ issue66/rutledge-pertek-abohilal-fitzgibbon.

[98] Carolyn Yoder, *The Little Book of Trauma Healing*: Revised & Updated, 2nd ed. (New York: Good Books, 2020), https://www.simonandschuster.com/books/ The-Little-Book-of-Trauma-Healing-Revised-

"spiritual first aid."[100] The evidence points towards the need for greater consideration of how people's spiritual lives and religious coping mechanisms are part of their experiences of crisis and healing from trauma. In existing psychosocial support, spirituality is rarely included as a potentially sensitive topic and rarely within typical mental health training from a Western perspective. The pastoral and spiritual support from faith actors and communities therefore runs in parallel without integration. While care is needed to broach questions of spirituality, research documents that people widely use positive and negative religious coping mechanisms during and recovering from crises[101] and so this area cannot be ignored in any work that aims to help people overcome trauma. A sub-area arising on this topic is the use of religious coping among aid workers themselves to deal with the stressors of the work (secondary trauma). Studies so far show that religious coping can help aid workers,[102] including international, national,[103] and local, to

Updated/Carolyn-Yoder/Justice-and-Peacebuilding/9781680996036 and https://ministry.americanbible.org/trauma-healing.

99 Ricko Damberg Nissen et al., "The Catalogue of Spiritual Care Instruments: A Scoping Review," *Religions* 11, no. 5 (May 2020): 252, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11050252.

100 See Spiritual First Aid Hub, https://www.spiritualfirstaidhub.com/.

101 For example, Anne Eyre, "Creating Spiritual and Psychological Resilience: Integrating Care in Disaster Relief Work," *Journal of Public Mental Health* 9, no. 2 (July 29, 2010): 37–38, https://doi.org/10.5042/jpmh.2010.0329; Joey Ager, Alastair Ager, and Behailu Abebe, "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Humanitarian Emergencies in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities for Engaging with the Faith Sector," *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 12, no. 1 (2014): 72–83; Chandi Fernando and Michel Ferrari, "Spirituality and Resilience in Children of War in Sri Lanka," *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health* 13, no. 1 (2011), http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/19349637.2011.547138#.Vq_HbTYrLX8.

102 Ozgul Ozcan, Mark Hoelterhoff, and Eleanor Wylie, "Faith and Spirituality as Psychological Coping Mechanism among Female Aid Workers: A Qualitative Study," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 6, no. 1 (June 21, 2021): 15, https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00100-z.

destress, but that these same actors can also use religious coping strategies negatively, which can harm their mental health as a result.[104]

Trend 3: Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB), recognizing intersectionality, and the effects of multiple vulnerabilities on religious minorities

As an international human right enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Freedom of Religion and Belief (FoRB) is relevant to development work as a right to be upheld to assure internationally understood definitions of human dignity. FoRB is not a new trend – there has been a "Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief" at the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights since 1986, for example. Yet it has gained in significance in recent years, with much cited figures from Pew Research Center seeming to indicate that 83% of the world's population experiences "religious restrictions," with their 2019 figures still indicating the highest levels of government restrictions on religions worldwide.[105] However, as Birdsall and Beaman have noted,[106] the figures are misleading, not least because the

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[103] Alastair Ager et al., "Stress, Mental Health, and Burnout in National Humanitarian Aid Workers in Gulu, Northern Uganda," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 25, no. 6 (December 2012): 713–20, https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.21764.

[104] Laura E. Captari et al., "Negative Religious Coping and Burnout among National Humanitarian Aid Workers Following Typhoon Haiyan," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 37, no. 1 (April 1, 2018): 28.

[105] Pew Research Center, "Globally, Social Hostilities Related to Religion Decline in 2019, While Government Restrictions Remain at Highest Levels" (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, September 30, 2021), https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/30/globally-social-hostilities-related-toreligion-decline-in-2019-while-government-restrictions-remain-at-highest-levels/.

[106] Judd Birdsall and Lori Beaman, "Faith in Numbers: Can We Trust Quantitative Data on Religious Affiliation and Religious Freedom?," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 18, no. 3 (July 2, 2020): 60–68, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2020.1795401.

definition of "religious restrictions" is not the same as the legal definitions for violations of FoRB. Likewise, the measurement of FoRB violations worldwide is a complex area with many different measurement approaches taken, which can be influenced by politicized agendas and show "differing understandings of the nature and relative significance of violations and their comparability."[107] "International religious freedom" has risen in prominence as a somewhat synonymous but contested term driven by religio-political agendas from the US.[108] This has led to what Hurd calls "religious freedom promotion,"[109] which politicians use to focus attention on certain religious populations and justify foreign policy goals.

Petersen and Marshall[110] summarize the four major positions that those linked to FoRB often take:

1. "Religious discrimination is really about something else," which is associated with secular human rights organizations who are skeptical about FoRB and its potential to act as a barrier to other human rights promotion, such as women's rights.

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[107] Katherine Marshall, "Towards Enriching Understandings and Assessments of Freedom of Religion or Belief: Politics, Debates, Methodologies, and Practices," CREID Working Paper 6, Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2021), 2, https://doi.org/10.19088/CREID.2021.001.

[108] Jeffrey Haynes, "Trump and the Politics of International Religious Freedom," *Religions* 11, no. 8 (August 2020): 385, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11080385.

[109] Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, "The Paradox of Free Religion," Berkley Forum (blog), January 12, 2021, https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/theparadox-of-free-religion.

[110] Marie Juul Petersen and Katherine Marshall, "The International Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief: Sketching the Contours of a Common Framework" (Copenhagen: The Danish Institute for Human Rights, April 5, 2019): 19, https://www.humanrights.dk/publications/international-promotionfreedom-religion-belief.

2. "Persecution of Christians is the most pressing concern," associated primarily with conservative Christian organizations and focused on persecuted Christians often in the Middle East.
3. "The real victims of discrimination today are the Muslims," with Islamophobia in Europe and North America as one of the most pressing topics of concern.
4. A human rights approach to FoRB, which underlines that "FoRB is about the protection of all individuals' right to believe and practice their religion (or not)," and is mostly taken up by progressive organizations with rights-based agendas, from FBOs to human rights groups.

The fourth approach that "anchor[s FoRB] in a broader human rights framework"[111] is ultimately encouraged, with the authors clarifying that "there is no conflict between FoRB and women's rights. The right to FoRB is about the protection of all individuals and their right to interpret and practice their religion... Furthermore, FoRB can never be used to justify discrimination, inequality, or violation of other people's rights – including women's rights."[112]

Recent reviews have found very little evidence that FoRB or analysis on religious inequalities and religious minorities are integrated into development approaches.[113] The Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (CREID) project has brought religious inequality and FoRB debates into closer

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[111] Petersen and Marshall, *Sketching the Contours*, 6.

[112] Petersen and Marshall, *Sketching the Contours*, 17.

[113] Mariz Tadros and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, *Inclusive Development: Beyond Need, Not Creed*, CREID Working Paper 1, Coalition for Religious Equality and Inclusive Development (Brighton: Institute for Development Studies, 2020), https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/15120; Marshall, *Enriching Understandings*.

conversation with religion and development debates. The project critiques previous religions and development work by examining how and why religious inequalities are ignored. If religions and development efforts only seek to understand and work with majority religious traditions and their representative faith actors, then they purposefully blind themselves to the experience of religious minorities and the inequalities they face. This highlights the need to properly understand power dynamics between majority and minority religions in any context and how the faith actors engaging in humanitarian and development work mirror these dynamics.

In connection to international cooperation, the 2017 Beirut Declaration launched the "Faith for Rights" framework used by the UN and its faith-based partners to discuss and find common ground on religious and human rights. FoRB is also relevant throughout the SDGs framework, as a recent series from the Danish Institute of Human Rights highlights with briefing papers on FoRB and the SDGs, covering women's rights, education, health, freedom of expression, and climate change.[114]

Trend 4: COVID-19, religion, and development
The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on how researchers and practitioners think about religion and development. In many regions, religious institutions and facilities play significant roles in health-related service delivery and policymaking. Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, there has been a growing focus on different aspects of the intersections between faith actors,

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[114] See The International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, https://www.ippforb.com/resources.

religion, and COVID-19 in academic research. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, many studies have surveyed the role of religious coping mechanisms and spiritual support as part of broader responses to mental health exacerbated by COVID-19.[115] As part of their gender-related development engagements, FBOs have issued advocacy and guidance documents on the rise of domestic violence, for example, during the pandemic.[116]   [117] More generally, there is increasing evidence that faith actors have mobilized resources to assist vulnerable groups in their communities who were disproportionally affected by the pandemic.[118] The influence of faith actors, in general, and of religious leaders in particular, has been at the center of debate, especially as regards the helpful dissemination of public health information, on one hand, or the spread of false information and conspiracy theories about the virus, on the other hand.[119] In terms of vaccines, the debate,

[115] For example, Victor Counted et al., "Hope and Well-Being in Vulnerable Contexts during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Does Religious Coping Matter?," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 17, no. 1 (December 3, 2020): 70–81, https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2020.1832247; Muhammad Saud et al., "Social Support through Religion and Psychological Well-Being: COVID-19 and Coping Strategies in Indonesia," *Journal of Religion and Health* 60, no. 5 (October

[116] , 2021): 3309–3325, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-021-01327-1; Francesco Molteni et al., "Searching for Comfort in Religion: Insecurity and Religious Behaviour during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Italy," *European Societies* 23, no. sup1 (February 19, 2021): S704–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/146 16696.2020.1836383.

[117] For example, ACT Alliance, "Gender and Faith perspectives on COVID-19," Briefing Paper (Geneva: ACT Alliance, 2020), https://www.genderandcovid-19. org/resources/gender-and-faith-perspectives-on-covid-19/; Mandy Marshall, "Domestic Abuse and COVID-19: How Churches Can Respond," London: Anglican Consultative Council and the Anglican Alliance, 2020), https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/gender-justice/domestic-abuse-andcovid-19.aspx; World Council of Churches (WCC), "COVID-19 Responses" (Le Grand-Saconnex: WCC, 2021), https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/ covid-19-resources.

[118] For example, Dario Paulo Barrera Rivera, "Religión y COVID 19 en el Perú del Bicentenario. Laicidad de colaboración y reacciones evangélicas a la pandemia," Estudos de Religião 34, no. 2 (September 16, 2020): 431–62, https://doi.org/10.15603/2176-1078/er.v34n2p431-462; Thelma Miryam de Souza Mathiazen, Evany Bettine de Almeida, and Thais Bento Lima da Silva, "Espiritualidade e religiosidade como estratégias de enfrentamento do idoso no distanciamento social devido à pandemia de COVID-19," Revista Kairós-Gerontologia 24, no. 29 (2021): 237–58.

[119] For example, Sima Barmania and Michael J. Reiss, "Health Promotion Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Importance of Religion," Global Health Promotion 28, no. 1 (March 1, 2021): 15–22,

especially in the US, has often focused on religious liberty debates as a possible ground for exemption from requirements geared to public health.[120] The JLI, the World Faiths Development Dialogue, and the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs at Georgetown University have set up a repository of resources covering religion and COVID-19 that can be accessed online and searched by development-related thematic areas and geographical region.[121]

Who are the faith actors?

We use the term "faith actors" to allow for a broad understanding of a diverse group of actors who are commonly referred to in different ways, including local, national, and international faith-based organizations (FBOs), religious communities, and religious leaders. In this section, we summarize the key trends and debates that have formed among academics and in grey literature on the definition of faith actors over the last two decades. We then explain our own understanding of who faith actors are (see diagram below).

Most reflections on the definition of faith actors in development, particularly until the mid-2010s,[122] have used

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https://doi.org/10.1177/1757975920972992. See also: Fortune Sibanda et al, eds., Religion and the COVID-19 *Pandemic in Southern Africa* (London: Routledge, 2022) and Chammah J. Kaunda et al, eds., Christianity and COVID-19: *Pathways for Faith* (London: Routledge, 2022).

[120] Council on Foreign Relations, "COVID-19 Vaccines and Religious Exemptions," Webinar, November 30, 2021, accessed March 17, 2022, https://www.cfr.
org/event/covid-19-vaccines-and-religious-exemptions.

[121] See Faith and COVID-19: Resource Repository, https://covidfaithrepository.georgetown.domains/.

[122] Julia Berger, "Religious Nongovernmental Organizations: An Exploratory Analysis," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 14, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 15–39, https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022988804887; Gerard Clarke, "Faith Matters: Faith-Based Organizations, Civil Society and International Development," *Journal of International Development* 18, no. 6 (2006): 835–848,

the term "Faith-Based Organizations." This reflects in part the fact that Christian traditions, especially Catholicism and mainline Protestantism, had the longest history of partnering with other development actors. It also reflects the rapid expansion of civil society organizations and especially organized non-government organizations, many with an explicitly development and humanitarian vocation. The structure of Christian communities is conducive to establishing formally registered organizations that are like those of other NGOs and acceptable to other NGOs in their separation from, while remaining affiliated to, religious institutions. Using the term "FBO" to refer to all types of faith actors from many different religious traditions, however, has shortcomings. For example, in some Muslim contexts,[123] the role that religion plays in an organization's ethos and formal institutional ties may be more implicit than overt, acknowledged in the identity of most charitable organizations, and need not be designated as a separate "faith-based" identity (further, some reject the label in part because of perceived political disadvantages).

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https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.1317; Gerard Clarke, "Faith-Based Organizations and International Development: An Overview," in *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, ed. Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 17–45, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230371262_2; Tara Hefferan, Julie Adkins, and Laurie A. Occhipinti, *Bridging the Gaps: Faith-Based Organizations, Neoliberalism, and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), https://rowman.com/ISBN/9780739132876/Bridging-the-Gaps-Faith-based-Organizations-Neoliberalismand-Development-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean; Laurie A. Occhipinti, "Faith-Based Organizations in Development," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*, ed. Emma Tomalin (London: Routledge, 2015); Emma Tomalin, "Thinking about Faith-Based Organizations in Development: Where Have We Got to and What Next?," *Development in Practice* 22, no. 5–6 (2012): 689–703, https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2012. 686600.

[123] Nida Kirmani and Sarah Zahidi, "The Role of Religious Values and Beliefs in Charitable and Development Organizations in Karachi and Sindh, Pakistan," Working Paper (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2010), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08abb40f0b64974000736/summary_paper_50.pdf.

The boundaries of the terms "Faith-Based Organizations" have been widely discussed. Many have argued, for instance, for or against the inclusion of informal actors such as congregations, Sunday schools, and varieties of groupings arising from religious communities.[124] In addition, local faith actors might have very different characteristics from formal FBOs, such as whom they chose to partner with. Some scholars[125] have observed that local faith actors in the Global South might be reluctant to engage with international donor governments due to compliance measures that would require them to distance themselves from their religious identity. Likewise, the evidence points towards the reality that international development actors are more likely to want to engage with formalized faith actors that operate in the same ways as NGOs.[126]

Much of the debate on the definition of faith actors has focused on comparisons between FBOs and other NGOs,[127] and between FBOs from different religious traditions and within

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[124] Thomas H. Jeavons, "Religious and Faith-Based Organizations: Do We Know One When We See One?," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 140–45, https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764003257499; Clarke, "Faith Matters"; *Tomalin, Faith-Based Organizations in Development.*

[125] Ronald J. Sider and Heidi Rolland Unruh, "Typology of Religious Characteristics of Social Service and Educational Organizations and Programs," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 109–34, https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764003257494; Tomalin, *Faith-Based Organizations in Development*.

[126] Emma Tomalin, "Religions, Poverty Reduction and Global Development Institutions," *Palgrave Communications* 4, no. 132 (November 6, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0167-8; Olivia Wilkinson et al., *Faith in Localisation?*

[127] Robert Leurs, "Are Faith-Based Organizations Distinctive? Comparing Religious and Secular NGOs in Nigeria," *Development in Practice* 22, no. 5–6 (2012): 704–20, https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2012.685868; Matthew Clarke and Vicki-Anne Ware, "Understanding Faith-Based Organizations: How FBOs Are Contrasted with NGOs in International Development Literature," *Progress in Development Studies* 15, no. 1 (2015): 37–48, https://doi.org/10.1177/1464993414546979.

traditions.[128] In Tanzania, for example, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches were perceived to be more engaged in evangelization activities, while Lutheran churches appeared to be more focused on development work.[129] In the same context, study participants perceived Muslim organizations as more fragmented, less hierarchical, and less supported by international donors, and Catholic FBOs as more active and influential in advocacy. Context and tradition-related factors can greatly influence the positions and roles that different FBOs take up, especially in relation to other actors.

Aside from single groups and denominations, there are also many interreligious bodies that form useful networks with which international actors engage. Religions for Peace (RfP)[130] is an international coalition of nationally and regionally based interreligious bodies around the world and regularly engages with major UN and other development initiatives. Many scholars have documented the potential for interreligious cooperation in humanitarian, development, and peace work[130] and there are

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[128] Riham Ahmed Khafagy, "Faith-Based Organizations: Humanitarian Mission or Religious Missionary," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 5, no. 1 (October 9, 2020): 13, https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-020-00080-6.

[129] Leurs, Robert, Peter Tumaini-Mungu, and Abu Mvungi, "Mapping the Development Activities of Faith-Based Organizations in Tanzania," Working Paper 58 (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2011), http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1659/. 130 See Religions for Peace, https://www.rfp.org/.

[130] Peter Bender, "Religions for Peace (RfP) and Global and European Interfaith Politics: Different Faiths, Common Actions – in Foreign Policy?," in *Rethinking the Religious Factor in Foreign Policy*, ed. Maria Toropova (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2021): 129–49, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-337766_7; Ezra Chitando and Ishanesu Sextus Gusha, eds., *Interfaith Networks and Development: Case Studies from Africa*, 1st ed. (Cham: Springer Nature, 2022);
Eboo Patel, *Interfaith Leadership: A Primer* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016); Philip Fountain, "Mennonite Disaster Relief and the Interfaith Encounter in Aceh, Indonesia," *Asian Ethnology* 75, no. 1 (2016): 163–90; Stacey Gutkowski and Craig Larkin, "Spiritual Ambiguity in Interfaith Humanitarianism: Local Faith Communities, Syrian Refugees and Muslim-Christian Encounters in Lebanon and Jordan," *Migration Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 1054-1074, https://doi. org/10.1093/migration/mnab024; Martin Munyao, "Migration, Interfaith Engagement, and Mission among Somali Refugees in Kenya: Assessing the Cape Town Commitment

also many guides and programs on interfaith engagement, such as Learning to Live Together[131] from Arigatou International.

More recent contributions have increasingly moved away from an exclusive use of the term "FBOs." For example, some have suggested "faith-inspired organizations,"[132] or others have suggested the use of a range of terms to reflect the diversity of actors at local levels and across traditions (e.g., "national/local faith-influenced organization," "informal local faith and worship communities," "faith networks," and "local faith figures.")[133] Others have defined faith actors according to their main purpose. According to this view, for example, groups that share worship practices are labeled as "congregations," while those who are engaged in providing aid and support are defined as "local associations, charities and faith networks."[134]

As key trends and debates on the terminology used to describe faith actors show, there is no single typology that applies to each context of analysis. We suggest the use of "faith actors" as a broad category and offer guidance on how to use more specific terms through this diagram. This diagram is organized according

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from a Global South Perspective One Decade On," *Religions* 12, no. 2 (February 2021): 129, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12020129.

[131] Angeliki Aroni, "Learning to Live Together: An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education," Good Practices Series (Geneva: Arigatou International, 2014), https://ethicseducationforchildren.org/images/zdocs/Arigatou-GPS-No2-Learning-to-Play-Together-EN.pdf.

[132] Katherine Marshall, *Global Institutions of Religion: Ancient Movers*, Modern Shakers (London: Routledge, 2013), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203581940.

[133] El Nakib and Ager, Local Faith Community; Merel van Meerkerk and Brenda Bartelink, "Religious Actors in Development: Time to Fix Our Blind Spot," The Broker - Connecting worlds of knowledge, January 28, 2015, https://www.thebrokeronline.eu/religious-actors-in-development-time-to-fix-our-blindspot/.

[134] Katherine Marshall et al., "Implementing Strategic Religious Engagement in International Development," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19, no. sup1 (November 1, 2021): 63–77, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2021.1983350.

to the actors' context – i.e., international, national, and regional, and local – due to the common organizing levels of humanitarian and development activity. The use of more specific terms should consider context- and religion specific types of faith actor.

International	National & Regional	Local

• **International faith-based organizations (FBOs)**
  ○ World Vision, Islamic Relief, etc.
• **Religious bodies, networks, leaders**
  ○ The Catholic Church
  ○ World Council of Churches,
  ○ Baha'i International Community, etc.
	• **National & regional FBOs and Networks**
	  ○ National Christian Health Associations
	• **National & regional religious bodies & networks**
	  ○ African Council of Religious Leaders
	• **National & regional religious leaders**
		• Grassroots FBOs
		• Local religious bodies
		  ○ Zakat committees
		  ○ Basic Ecclesial Communities
		  ○ Religious leaders (including women and youth leaders)
		  ○ Places of worship: mosques, churches, temples

• Connected to UN & Int. Processes
• FBOs:
  ○ mission, vision,
  ○ affiliation,
  ○ fundraising, and
  ○ recruitment.
	• Connected between international and local levels
	• Know humanitarian and development language and processes
		• Spontaneous mobilization of local volunteer networks and other resources, e.g., a mosque providing food assistance for refugees
		• Formal and informal organizational structures

● **Religious leaders** are present at every level. It is important not to generalize or to use the term "religious leaders" to refer to all "faith actors." In fact, there are many different types and roles of leadership, considering internal hierarchies and levels of formality and informality. For example, research has shown that the role of pastors' wives, i.e., informal leaders, on child protection, is particularly important.[135] Some religious leaders can be very influential in the international

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[135] Carola Eyber et al., "The Role and Experience of Local Faith Leaders in Promoting Child Protection: A Case Study from Malawi," *Intervention* 16 no. 1

(2018): 31-37, https://doi.org/10.1097/WTF.0000000000000156; Carola Eyber and Kanykey Jailobaeva, "'When a Child Has Not Made 18 Years and

You Marry Her off … Don't Bother to Invite Me! I Will Not Come': The Role and Involvement of Faith Leaders' Wives in Child Protection Issues," in *International Development and Local Faith Actors: Ideological and Cultural Encounters*, ed. Kathryn Kraft and Olivia J. Wilkinson (New York: Routledge, 2020). 137 Thaut, Christian *Faith-Based Humanitarian Agencies*.

humanitarian and development realm, while others, who are active at national or local level are key to engage with to advocate for better legislation or to achieve change at community level. ſ **International FBOs** often present high degrees of formality (i.e., recruitment processes, fundraising, internal structure, etc.), are affiliated with a religious tradition that influences their mission and vision to various degrees,[137] and engage with other international actors, both religious and secular, as well as with smaller organizations at national and/or local level. They take part in international development and humanitarian programs together with other international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), donors, and UN agencies.

- **National and regional faith actors** often engage with other country-wide organizations, including governmental actors. Through their connections, e.g., with wider networks within their religious affiliation and/or interreligious organizations and councils, they may also participate in international humanitarian and development processes involving other INGOs, donors, and UN agencies. They can also function as mediators between such international processes and local faith actors.

- **Local faith actors** include grassroots FBOs and more informal actors, which are often linked to a place of worship, such as Zakat committees and congregations. While these are often involved in humanitarian responses and development processes, they are less likely to have direct links to international humanitarian and development actors. In the last decade, local faith actors have been increasingly looked at as potential and actual partners in development

and humanitarian interventions. For example, the Global Compact on Refugees [136] refers to the importance of both "local actors" and "faith-based actors" as part of its multi-stakeholder approach[137] and, indeed, local faith actors are critical in responding to refugees.[138] The focus on localization emerges from the aim to be "as local as possible, as international as necessary" [139] in humanitarian response. Research has shown that partnering with local faith actors can increase the effectiveness and suitability of context-specific interventions.[140][141] However, there is still a long way to go to achieve effective, fair, and equal collaboration between international actors and local faith actors in humanitarian and development work.

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[136] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "The Global Compact on Refugees" (New York: United Nations, 2018), https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html.

[137] Wurtz and Wilkinson, *Local Faith Actors*.

[138] Susanna Trotta and Olivia Wilkinson, "Local Faith Communities and Responses to Displacement," in *The Handbook of Displacement*, ed. Peter Adey et al. (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020): 771–84, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-47178-1_53.

[139] United Nations, *One Humanity: Shared Responsibility*, Report of the UN Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit, 2016 (UN Doc. A/70/709), https://www.alnap.org/help-library/one-humanity-shared-responsibility-report-of-the-un-secretary-general-for-the-world.

[140] For example, Joey Ager, Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, and Alastair Ager, "Local Faith Communities and the Promotion of Resilience in Contexts of Humanitarian Crisis," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 28, no. 2 (June 1, 2015): 202–21, https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fev001; Kanykey Jailobaeva et al., "Child Protection Practices and Attitudes of Faith Leaders Across Senegal, Uganda, and Guatemala," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 19, no. 1 (January

[141] , 2021): 95–110, https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2021.1874131; Olivia Wilkinson et al., 'Faith in Localisation? The Experiences of Local Faith Actors Engaging with the International Humanitarian System in South Sudan," *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 7, no. 1 (January 11, 2022): 4, https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00113-8.

A New Constitution for Sri Lanka

Rohan Edrisinha

Sinhala   **Tamil**

Sri Lanka needs a Third Republican Constitution but the prospects for this look bleak.[142] A new Constitution that learns from the mistakes of the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions, adapts features from international best practice and which is compatible with basic principles of constitutionalism, is vital for the introduction of good governance, the protection of human rights and national reconciliation and unity.

WHY DO WE NEED A NEW CONSTITUTION?

The first two republican constitutions were partisan, were not supreme, and suffered from the same basic flaws-

a) They were designed to promote the political vision and ideology of the party in power.

b) They entrenched, rather than countered, majoritarianism; and

c) They were designed with the convenience of the executive, rather than the empowerment of the People, as their primary motivation or rationale.

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[142] This is a revised version of an article written in 2015. Some sections are more relevant than others are for a discussion on Good Governance and Development.

The First Republican Constitution of 1972 was essentially a United Front Constitution which introduced what Neelan Tiruchelvam has called the "instrumental" use of constitutions by governments to further their own political agendas. The Second Republican Constitution of 1978 was instrumental in introducing what its most credible critic, Chanaka Amaratunga, described as the authoritarian and realpolitik vision of its principal architect, J.R. Jayewardene. Both constitutions were introduced by governments that possessed two-thirds of majorities in Parliament thereby removing the need for striving for consensus across the political and ethnic divide. Both constitutions concentrated power in a single institution (the National State Assembly or Parliament under the 1972 and the office of the Executive President under the 1978). Both were drafted and adopted with little meaningful public participation. Despite the fundamental flaws being the same, the most vocal critics of one were the principal architects of the other.[143] If Sri Lanka is serious about preventing a return of the authoritarianism of a kind experienced in the country since 1982, it must introduce a new constitution that divides power, promotes effective checks and balances and empowers the People so that their elected politicians remain accountable to them between elections. The present economic crisis was caused by a political crisis that was largely due to flaws in the constitution. The Constitution failed to ensure good governance and prevent corruption, responsible financial management and accountability. A Constitution cannot solve all the challenges

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[143] See C. Amaratunga (ed) (1989) **Ideas for Constitutional Reform** (Colombo: Council for Liberal Democracy)

faced by a country but can certainly ensure a degree of public accountability and responsiveness in governance. A new constitution that is a non-partisan, consensus document is essential to achieve this objective. It is unfortunate that the major candidates at the forthcoming presidential elections do not seem to be addressing this important issue.

THE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING A CONSTITUTION

A Constitution is meant to protect the People from the people who exercise political power and empower the People vis- a -vis the rulers.   Friedrich Hayek in his seminal work, The Constitution of Liberty, highlighted this fundamental objective as follows: -

The formula that all power derives from the people referred not so much to the recurrent election of representatives as to the fact that the people, organized as a constitution -making body, had the exclusive right to determine the powers of the representative legislature. The constitution was thus conceived as a protection of the people against all arbitrary action, on the part of the legislative as well as the other branches of government.[144]

If a constitution is to achieve such an objective, the people have to be actively engaged and involved in the constitution making process. The pro-ruler and pro-executive convenience biases of the 1972 and 1978 Constitutions that undermined their people empowerment features existed because these constitutions were designed by the government, for the government and of the

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[144] F.A. Hayek, (1972) **The Constitution of Liberty,** p 178 **(**Chicago: Chicago University Press)

government. It is vital that the same mistake is not repeated in the future.

The theory of Constitutionalism highlights what the objectives of a constitution should be.

1. It should provide a *political frame* for society or the institutional architecture for the governance of the country.
2. It should protect the *freedom and autonomy of the individual* and the rights of minorities-all minorities, not just ethnic and religious minorities.
3. It should enshrine *values and principles* by which the society should be governed.

A constitution is assessed on the basis of how it achieves these 3 objectives. In Sri Lanka the constitution reform debate has tended to focus almost exclusively on the first objective; the debate on whether the executive should be presidential or parliamentary; the electoral system for electing members to the legislature, should it be "first past the post" or based on proportional representation etc. While these are important issues, it is important to recognize the significance of the other two objectives.

Why do we need a constitution? If one looks to constitutional history, one sees that the raison d'être for a constitution was to act as a check on majoritarianism. While it was recognized that in a democracy, decision making by determining what the majority desired was an important working principle, it was also recognized that in relation to some matters particularly those dealing with human rights, majoritarian decision making was

NOT appropriate as it would result in "the tyranny of the majority. "It was decided that such issues should then be taken outside the scope of the majoritarian decision-making power of the legislature, removed from the jurisdiction of the elected Parliament and placed within the scope of a supreme constitution.

The American constitutional theorist, Carl Friedrich has summed up the objectives of Constitutionalism:

The core objective of Constitutionalism is that of safeguarding each member of the political community as a political person possessing a sphere of genuine autonomy. The Constitution is meant to protect the self in its dignity and worth. The prime function of a constitutional political order has been and is being accomplished by means of a system of regularized restraints imposed upon those who wield political power.[145]

An example would be inserting a Bill of Rights into the Constitution to protect basic fundamental rights even from the reach of the elected representatives of the people. A constitution was therefore conceived to protect certain important matters from the reach of the legislative and executive branches of government. It was conceived in the words of Eugene Rostow, a former Dean of Harvard Law School, as a "counter majoritarian document."

Carl Friedrich, <u>Transcendent Justice</u> p 17.

In recent years the norm setting, values, and principles enshrining aspect of a constitution has been highlighted. The Constitution of South Africa, 1996, which is still seen as one of the most progressive constitutions in the world offers an excellent example. Article 1 of the constitution declares that "South Africa is a republic founded on the following values" and then lists a series of them. These include human dignity, non-racialism; non sexism; the rule of law; multi-party democracy; accountability, openness and responsiveness. Article 2 declares:

"The Constitution is supreme. All law inconsistent with it is void."

The contrast between the first two articles of the South African constitution and the Sri Lankan constitution is striking. The former highlights values and principles and their supremacy. The latter is obsessed about power and who exercises power.

THE CONSTITUTION MUST REALLY BE SUPREME

A Constitution is the supreme law of the land. But even this basic and to many obvious first principle has been rejected by the drafters of Sri Lanka's autochthonous (made in Sri Lanka) constitutions. The 1978 Constitution contains 3 provisions which not only undermine the supremacy of the Constitution but are unparalleled in constitutional democracies. These are Articles 16, 80 (3) and 84 of the Constitution.

Article 16 of the Sri Lankan constitution basically states the opposite of Article 2 of the South African constitution. It declares that ALL existing law, written and unwritten is valid even if it is inconsistent with the Supreme Law, the constitution. Article 80(3) prevents the people from challenging provisions in laws

that have been enacted by the legislature on the ground that the legislature has enacted an unconstitutional law. This is a right that the people in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, South Africa, the U.S.A., Canada, and all constitutional democracies have and is a vital safeguard for the people in protecting their rights and upholding the supremacy of their constitution. This right, which existed under the Soulbury Constitution, was done away with by the framers of the Constitution of 1972 and continued under the present Constitution.

Article 84, unbelievably, instructs Parliament how it can introduce unconstitutional laws!

These three provisions are instructive in demonstrating the (lack of) commitment of Sri Lanka's constitutional framers to the principle of the supremacy of the constitution. If the new constitution is to be compatible with international best practice and basic principles of constitutionalism and promote good governance and accountability, these 3 provisions should not be part of the new constitution.

It is not surprising that the main political parties have demonstrated little if any interest in the important issues highlighted above. These issues strengthen the powers of the People at the expense of the politicians and impose constitutionally mandated qualifications on how governmental power is exercised. The manner in which the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was adopted in 2015 reminds us of the importance of continuous public engagement in the constitution making process. The composition of the Constitutional Council under the 19th Amendment is worse than under the 17th

Amendment; various clauses such as those on dual citizenship were inserted without any public consultation and were politically motivated. The Members of Parliament, both from government and opposition, engaged in a process of closed door "political wheeler dealing" without any sense of shame or guilt that in so doing they were violating first principles of constitution making.

The 20th Amendment makes the situation worse. It undoes the efforts made since the Presidential Commission on Youth Unrest (which highlighted "politicization of key institutions" as one of the causes for the youth unrest in the late 1980s) to ensure that some institutions are insulated from political interference.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON CURRENT CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

1. The Executive.

An important lesson from the experience of the Second Republican Constitution is that a person elected by the whole country tends to have an exaggerated notion of his/her own importance, legitimacy and authority. This was foreseen by Dudley Senanayake who opposed Presidentialism when it was discussed in the early 1970s:

> *"The Presidential system has worked in the United States where it was the result of a special historic situation. It works in France for similar reasons. But for Ceylon it would be disastrous. It would create a tradition of Caesarism. It would concentrate power in a leader and undermine*

Parliament and the structure of political parties."[146]

As predicted, the executive presidency has, since its introduction, fostered authoritarianism, undermined other democratic institutions such as the Cabinet of Ministers, Parliament and the judiciary, and through the device of the Referendum, as was seen in 1982, even elections and multi-party democracy. The locus of power shifted from Parliament which, with all its shortcomings, was at least relatively open and transparent, to a closed Presidential Secretariat with unelected and powerful Presidential advisors and officials. Presidential Advisors who were often more powerful than Cabinet Ministers (especially during the Premadasa Presidency), were not accountable to the public.

An "overmighty" nationally elected President also subverts coalition government and power sharing as was seen in the brief period of co-habitation between Chandrika Kumaratunga and Ranil Wickremesinghe. J.R. Jayewardene and his admirers often defended the presidential system as promoting stability. In the Sri Lankan context, stability could mean a government consisting of several political parties across the ideological and ethnic divide, rather than the concentration of power in a single individual. There needs to be a more nuanced understanding of the meaning

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[146] Dudley Senanayake and Colvin R de Silva were the two most persuasive critics of the presidential system when it was discussed in the early 1970s in Ceylon. See also C Amaratunga op.cit. for academic critiques by Amaratunga and Prof. C.R. de Silva.

of stability in the context of Sri Lanka's political culture for as was seen since 1982, there is a fine line between a simplistic definition of stability and authoritarianism.

2. The Electoral System.

There was a consensus at the elections in 1994 that Sri Lanka should opt for a genuinely mixed system (MMP) similar to that practiced in Germany, Scotland and New Zealand. Such a system combines the best features of the simple plurality system ("first past the post system") and the cardinal principle of Proportional Representation that representation in Parliament should be in proportion to the votes received by parties rather than the "winner takes all" principle that creates a mismatch between votes received by parties and the seats allocated in Parliament.

The mixed system is also easy for the people to understand, easy to administer, can include mechanisms to ensure inclusion and women's representation (an important consideration given that the Sri Lankan legislature has the lowest women's representation in South Asia) and can be designed to prevent floor crossing while ensuring that Members of Parliament also possess a degree of independence from their party leadership. It is important to ensure that MPs are representatives of the People, rather than ambassadors of their political parties. A parliament cannot perform its deliberative functions effectively if MPs function merely as party ambassadors, particularly in a context where most parties do not practice intra-party democracy. It is not surprising that one of the main targets of the Aragalaya movement was the Parliament and its membership.

The proposed 20th Amendment on Electoral Reform was flawed in all these respects and should be completely discarded. It was incomprehensible even to lawyers, was designed to favour of larger political parties and failed to provide an appropriate mix between the simple plurality system and proportional representation as it favoured the former at the expense of the latter.

3. The Bill of Rights

Sri Lanka's Bill of Rights falls short of international norms and standards. The basic flaws are with respect to the rights enumerated, the restriction/limitation clause that makes it too easy for the political branches to curtail such rights and with respect to their scope and enforcement.

a) The rights and their scope need to at least be compatible with the international covenants on human rights.

b) The restriction or limitation clause (Article 15) is drafted in a manner that makes it possible for the executive and legislature to impose restrictions with no criteria of objectivity and proportionality. This weakness has been highlighted for many years including during the deliberations of the All-Party Conference convened by President Premadasa in the early 1990s.

c) The First and Second Republican Constitutions both contained provisions that validated laws even though they were inconsistent with the Bill of Rights and the Constitution- Article 16 of the present Constitution. This

anomalous feature that is inconsistent with first principles of Constitutionalism should be removed.

d) The provision that requires a fundamental rights application for violation by executive and administrative action be filed in the Supreme Court (Article 126) is inconsistent with principles of access to justice and the rule of law. Persons living outside Colombo find it difficult to invoke the jurisdiction of the court; this provision undermines the role of the Supreme Court as the final appellate court of the country which is expected to deal with questions of law rather than fact; it also creates the anomaly of providing for no appeal in an important area of jurisprudence which could amount to a violation of the rule of law. Enabling fundamental rights applications to be filed in Provincial High Courts will not only address such weaknesses but also help to mainstream human rights among the judiciary and the legal community at a broader level.

4. The Independence of the Judiciary and other legal institutions.

The adoption of the 20th Amendment to the Constitution effectively brings the higher judiciary and fourth branch institutions under the control of the overmighty Executive President.

However, the damage done to this important institution over the past twenty years in particular means that it will need more than

constitutional reform to restore the institution's integrity and credibility.

Another institution that lacks credibility is the Attorney General's Department. It has proved particularly incompetent in its role as a reviewer of the constitutionality of draft legislation and advising the State on the constitutional propriety of its actions. Indeed, it is seen as an institution that defends and seeks to justify unconstitutional laws and actions.[147] The reintroduction of constitutional review of legislation by the courts through the initiative of the public will not only protect the supremacy of the constitution but also serve as an incentive for the Attorney General's Department to improve its performance in this area.

5. The Absence of Effective Fourth Branch or Guarantor Institutions

One of the challenges faced by many countries is that governments in power coopt and control important institutions thereby making them ineffective or politically partisan. These institutions are not part of the legislature or judiciary and so by default are often considered part of the executive. However, they need to fulfil responsibilities and functions that require a degree of non-partisan conduct and independence from executive control. Modern constitutional theory refers to such institutions as Fourth Branch Institutions (the 3 traditional branches are the legislature, executive and the judiciary) or Guarantor Institutions. Examples of such Fourth Branch Institutions are Human Rights Commissions, Elections Commissions, Public Service

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[147] See, for example, its disgraceful performance with respect to the Online Safety Bill 2024.

Commission, Ombud Offices, Women's or Gender Commissions, Anti-Corruption and Audit Commissions. Many newer Constitutions include several of these institutions in an effort to give them national stature and protection (by constitutional recognition) and protect them from executive control.

The question arises as to how members are selected and appointed to such institutions in a manner that ensures that they are independent and non-partisan. Sri Lanka opted to follow the model adopted in Nepal's Constitution of 1990 and also in its more recent Constitution of 2015: A Constitutional Council chaired by the Speaker and including representatives from both the government and the opposition; in short, a multipartisan appointing authority to ensure that appointees to the fourth branch institutions were independent and non-partisan. The 17th Amendment adopted in 2001 included representatives from civil society nominated jointly by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition as members of the Council.

It is unfortunate, but probably not surprising given Sri Lanka's political culture, that most of the subsequent constitutional amendments focused on weakening the independence and authority of the Constitutional Council and that Presidents Gotabaya Rajapakse and Ranil Wickremesinghe both undermined the autonomy of the Constitutional Council. A new Constitution must ensure that authoritarian Presidents cannot undermine the Constitutional Council's mandate.

6. Devolution of Power in a Unitary State

The devolution of power to the provinces under the 13th Amendment to the Constitution is weak, fragile and therefore can be undermined by the center. Significant provisions of the amendment remain unimplemented nearly 30 years after its introduction, which again raises the question of whether our constitution is supreme. There is something fundamentally wrong with a constitution that enables the Executive to disregard constitutional provisions it views as "inconvenient" and which provides no remedy for the People to ensure constitutional compliance. Provincial Councils, Chief Ministers and Boards of Ministers have experienced the shortcomings of the Thirteenth Amendment throughout the country.[148] With respect to the subjects that are to be devolved, it is vital that the Provincial Councils have the power to exercise such powers without the center undermining or reclaiming such powers as it has often done since 1987. The powers of the center to respond effectively to any threats to the unity and territorial integrity of the country, which in my view, already exist in the constitution, should be retained.

It is vital that following the defeat of the LTTE, the roots causes of the conflict are addressed, and power sharing and genuine devolution of power are important components of such a response. It is important to recognize that the Tamil people voted for moderation at recent elections, rejected Tamil hardline nationalist parties and groups, and that a failure to respond

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[148] See R. Edrisinha and A. Welikala, (eds) (2008) **Essays on Federalism in Sri Lanka** (Colombo): Centre for Policy Alternatives.

adequately to reasonable demands for devolution and equality will yet again ultimately strengthen the forces of Tamil extremism.

Addressing the reasonable demands for genuine and secure devolution of power to the provinces by overcoming the weaknesses in the 13th Amendment to the Constitution is the best way to generate trust and goodwill among the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and other communities in the country. Creating such inclusivity and national reconciliation through genuine power sharing is the best guarantee against threats to the unity and territorial integrity of the country.

The most difficult challenge for the framers of the Third Republican Constitution is how to deal with the provision entrenched in the constitution that declares Sri Lanka to be a unitary state. Is it possible to grant enhanced and effective devolved power to the provinces within the framework of a unitary state? It is important to remember that when the Thirteenth Amendment was introduced in 1987, several petitioners challenged the Amendment Bill on the grounds that the devolution to Provincial Councils envisaged under the amendment violated the unitary character of the Constitution. The Supreme Court in a 5-4 split decision held that it did not, with the majority referring to the various provisions in the amendment that effectively ensured the dominance of the center over the provinces.[149] The minority held that the powers

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[149] See **In Re the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution,** *1987 2 SLR 312.*

devolved to the provinces were sufficient to undermine the unitary principle. Given the divided opinion on the court, it is possible to argue that what was introduced under the Thirteenth Amendment amounted to "maximum devolution within a unitary state." How then does one strengthen devolution, introduce "Thirteenth Amendment Plus" that has been the minimum demand of the Tamil political leadership as well as minority groups in general, since 1995, that was proposed by the APRC and supported at various times both by the Rajapakse regime and the present one, within the confines of the unitary state?

There are 3 reasons why, in my view, the term "unitary" should be removed from the Third Republican Constitution. They are 1) Historical 2) Conceptual and 3) Jurisprudential.

1) Historical.

The political context in which the unitary label was introduced in the First Republican Constitution cannot be ignored. The Federal Party which had since the early 1950s emerged as the main representative of the Tamil people had on two occasions negotiated with Prime Ministers of Ceylon and agreed to political arrangements that fell short of a federal model. On both occasions, the Prime Ministers had to renege on their commitments due to pressure from within their own parties and from the main opposition political party at the time. At the time of the 1970 General Election, some individuals and groups had begun to question the moderate, democratic and Gandhian approach of the leader of the Federal Party, S.J.V. Chelvanayakam, which had produced few results, and contested the Federal Party on a separatist platform.

Chelvanayakam's response was to call upon the Tamil people to reject separation while affirming his and the party's commitment to a federal and united Ceylon. The Federal Party was swept to power and the separatist candidates fared so badly that they lost their deposits.

When the United Front Government established a Constituent Assembly to draft and adopt a new, autochthonous, republican constitution through a process that was extra constitutional, the Federal Party agreed to support the process and participate in the assembly. However, then followed a decision that certainly with the benefit of hindsight, must be the most insensitive, shortsighted decision that had the most adverse long-term consequences for national reconciliation and unity in post-Independence Ceylon/Sri Lanka. The United Front Government and its Minister of Constitutional Affairs, Colvin R de Silva proposed in Basic Resolution No 2 that the new constitution should contain a clause that declared that "Sri Lanka is a unitary state." This was a move that was completely unnecessary as the Soulbury Constitution contained no such provision but was undoubtedly unitary in character. Viewed in the context of the politics of the time and the General Election result in particular, the initiative was both provocative and humiliating for the Federal Party. Several Federal party leaders appealed to the Minister to withdraw the proposal but given that the United Front Government possessed a two thirds majority in Parliament due to the distortions created by the simple plurality electoral system that existed at the time, Minister de Silva and his colleagues saw no reason to compromise. It should be noted also that the process leading to the adoption of the First

Republican Constitution began the trend of governments in power drafting constitutions to enshrine and facilitate their political and ideological agendas and also to suit the convenience of the executive. However, for purposes of this paper, it is clear that the introduction of the unitary label in the constitution was a particular affront to the moderate Tamil political leadership and the Tamil people who had overwhelmingly endorsed them at the recent elections. This historical context cannot be ignored.[150]

2) Conceptual

The term "unitary" is traditionally defined as the habitual exercise of political power by one, central authority. Its Latin root "unus"- one- is significant. Power may be decentralized or devolved within a unitary constitution, but this is granted or given by the central authority and therefore can be taken back by that authority unilaterally. (Note the root unus, again.) The power granted to the decentralized authority is therefore relatively insecure. As Strong has observed,

 "It does not mean the absence of subsidiary law-making bodies, but it does mean that they exist and can be abolished at the discretion of the central authority."[151]

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[150] See R. Edrisinha, M. Gomez, V.T. Thamilmaran and A. Welikala (eds) (2008) **Power Sharing in Sri Lanka: Constitutional and Political Documents 1926-2008** (Colombo: Centre for Policy Alternatives) for more information on the history of the conflict in Ceylon/Sri Lanka and attempts to resolve the conflict through political and constitutional means.

[151] C.F. Strong, **Modern Political Constitutions,**

Given the traditional definition of the term unitary outlined above, the question that arises is whether power that is secure, guaranteed and effective can be devolved within the framework of a unitary state. The practice or implementation of the Thirteenth Amendment or maximum devolution within a unitary state supports the argument that devolution is vulnerable in such a context.

3) Jurisprudential

The recent jurisprudence of the Si Lankan Supreme Court has provided a clear answer to the question posed above. The most unequivocal of its decisions is the case of *Solaimuthu Rasu v Superintendent, Stafford Estate, Ragala.* (S.C. 21/2013) where all 3 judges of the court, Mohan Peiris C.J., Sripavan J and Eva Wanasundera J, wrote separate concurring opinions, a rather uncommon practice in the Sri Lankan Supreme Court.[152] The case dealt with the interpretation of the provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment dealing with land, one of the contentious issues when the Thirteenth Amendment was negotiated and drafted with Indian facilitation. The Supreme Court had to decide whether the Court of Appeal had erred in holding that the Provincial High Court had jurisdiction to hear cases dealing with the dispossession or alienation of state lands. The court held that the alienation of state land remained a central government responsibility. Peiris C.J. used controversial and unconvincing approaches to interpretation to justify his position that the intention of the framers of the Thirteenth Amendment was to

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[152] The difference in approach and emphasis among the 3 opinions is striking and revealing.

retain central control over state land. Wanasundera J cited a famous quotation from Lord Denning warning against a literal approach to interpretation and justifying filling in the gaps in the text to make sense of the enactment rather than "opening it up to destructive analysis," and then made the startling observation that "as such" the Thirteenth Amendment should be interpreted to "never pave way (sic) to destruction of any sort." Both judges adopted questionable approaches to interpretation and the citation of authority to support their view that under the Thirteenth Amendment, institutions of the centre retained overriding control over the subject of land.

Both judges however buttressed these arguments by referring to the term "unitary" and its traditional definition which had been cited by Sharvananda C.J. in the majority decision in the Thirteenth Amendment judgment. Peiris C.J. referred in this context to the power structure and power relationships under the Thirteenth Amendment. He stated that the term unitary implied the dominance of the centre and the subsidiary nature of the provincial councils. Eva Wanasundera J took the view that there could be no conflict between the centre and the provinces under a unitary constitution as the centre would always prevail in such situations.

In many of the constitutional cases dealing with the Thirteenth Amendment in the first ten years after its adoption, the Supreme Court displayed some sensitivity to the concept of devolution of power and the text of the amendment to ensure that the provincial councils and their representatives possessed a reasonable degree of power and autonomy. There was hardly

any reference to the term "unitary" and references instead to the linkages between provincial institutions and democracy, accountability and participatory democracy. In the past ten years however, the Supreme Court has displayed a lack of empathy for such values and the attitude of the court in the Solaimuthu Rasu case is a culmination of a process of increasing support for the political branches attempts to undermine the devolution of power to the provinces. While this may be part of a larger trend of the judiciary under pliant Chief Justices being willingly co-opted by the executive, the jurisprudence of the court which follows the traditional conceptual understanding of the term unitary supports the argument that there can be no effective devolution of power within the framework of a unitary state as traditionally defined.

This will therefore be the most difficult challenge faced by constitution makers in the future. The term unitary should never have been introduced into the Constitution and must be removed in order to ensure Thirteenth Amendment Plus or meaningful devolution of power. This however will only be possible if the Opposition adopts a responsible approach to the constitution making project and allows a rational debate on the pros and cons of retaining the unitary label in the new constitution. There are problems relating to myths and misconceptions about the term, accentuated by issues of language and translation. Since the Sinhala terms for "united" (eksath) and "unitary" (Ekeeya) are often used interchangeably many Sinhalese believe that for a country to be united it has to be "ekeeya." If these issues can be discussed reasonably openly and an informed debate take place on the limitations in the

Thirteenth Amendment (led ideally by the Chief Ministers of all provinces and from all political backgrounds who have experienced the frustrations of trying to implement the amendment) and on the meaning of the term unitary and why deleting it from the constitution does not necessarily have any implications for the unity and territorial integrity of the country and indeed could promote unity by facilitating a durable political and constitutional settlement, then there is a chance that the Third Republican constitution will lay the foundation for a new social contract that promotes equality, dignity and responsive governance.

CONCLUSION

A new Constitution that is compatible with first principles of Constitutionalism and which includes the values, principles and substantive features outlined above can only be adopted if political parties across the political spectrum work together. Though these parties and forces will inevitably have differences and rivalries, they must resolve to transcend such divisions with respect to the vital responsibility of providing leadership to the constitution making process. This must coincide with a process of public education and engagement to ensure that the new Constitution is not just a political deal of convenience, but rather, a genuine attempt to learn the lessons of the past, consolidate constitutionalism and democracy and forge a new social contact that has a broad consensus among the various political, ethnic and religious groups in the country.

The process of constitutional change must not suffer the same fate as the process of 1995-2000 when the then opposition

United National Party behaved irresponsibly and effectively sabotaged the reform process. The constitution reform project of 2015-18 floundered due to a lack of commitment on the part of the government leaders and their inability to manage the challenges of coalition government. The Romesh de Silva Committee, appointed in 2020 to prepare a new draft Constitution, produced a draft that was probably, on balance, worse than the present Constitution. The present challenge seems to me to be to ensure that a bad constitution is not replaced with one that is worse. Our politicians must stop manipulating the Constitution for narrow political interests. The concerns about the lack of accountability and responsiveness of political institutions and politicians highlighted during the Aragalaya must be addressed. Sri Lanka deserves a new Constitution that is truly a non-partisan, consensus, supreme law that both protects and empowers its people.

(rohan.edrisinha@gmail.com)

Part II

Articles by the Participants

Narrative Research on Inclusive Education for Special Needs Children

Yvonne .D. Charles

Abstract

Inclusive education for special needs children is crucial for ensuring equitable and quality education for all. This qualitative narrative research aims to explore and understand educators', students, and families' experiences, challenges, and aspirations within the special needs education framework. The study will involve in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to gather personal stories and situational contexts, focusing on how individuals interpret their experiences through storytelling. The research will specifically target children with ADHD and ASD, as the broader category of special needs encompasses a wide spectrum of physical, emotional, and cognitive disabilities. The study aims to capture firsthand experiences of a parent raising a child with special needs enrolled in a mainstream school and the experiences of a teacher working with special needs students at the same Church School in Colombo. This research will provide insights into how special needs children can thrive in a mainstream school environment with additional support and care from parents and the school. Additionally, it will emphasize the importance of tailored support, inclusive and accessible learning environments, and specialized teaching strategies to empower special needs students and foster their holistic development. The findings contribute to shaping effective policies and practices in promoting inclusive and equitable learning

opportunities for all special needs children, with a particular focus on those with ADHD and ASD in mainstream schools.

Keywords: Special needs students, inclusive education, narrative inquiry

Introduction

1.1. Introduction to Inclusion in Education

Inclusive education is of utmost importance as it values diversity and appreciates each student's unique contributions, fostering a sense of belonging and safety for all children in the classroom (Reetu, 2019). This approach aims to provide quality education for all children, regardless of barriers such as disability, giftedness, poverty, gender, or emotional challenges. According to the Right to Education Act, every classroom must welcome and accept all types of learners, promote respect, acknowledge strengths and weaknesses, and cater to the needs of a multicultural society. Inclusive education, for example, encourages the involvement of parents and teachers, helping students develop emotional intelligence and fostering friendships, teamwork, and collaboration. It requires changes in curriculum and teaching methods to focus on individualization and the needs of diverse students (Mahlo, 2013). However, the implementation of inclusive education policies presents significant challenges, particularly in disadvantaged communities, where disabled children are often still excluded and stigmatized, even in schools that are considered more inclusive.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscore the importance of inclusive and equitable quality education for all and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities. Goal 4 of the SDGs focuses on "ensuring inclusive and equitable quality

education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all." This goal ensures that all children can access free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Additionally, it seeks to promote equal access to affordable vocational training, higher education, and technical, technological, and scientific research. The SDGs advocate for inclusive, sustainable education and empower individuals to contribute to a peaceful and prosperous world.

Inclusive education provides equal opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities or special needs, to receive education in mainstream schools and classrooms. It is based on the principle that every child has the right to access and fully participate in quality education, regardless of their background, abilities, or disabilities. Inclusive education aims to create supportive, diverse, and welcoming learning environments that cater to the individual needs of every student.

According to the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, inclusive education is defined as the concept that "schools, centres of learning, and educational systems should be designed and developed to ensure that all students, regardless of their physical, sensory, intellectual, or social-emotional conditions, are included in meaningful ways as full members of the community of learners." This emphasizes the importance of embracing and accommodating diversity within educational settings.

Furthermore, inclusive education involves adopting varied teaching strategies, curriculum adaptations, and supportive resources to address the specific needs of students with

disabilities. It also fosters a positive and inclusive school culture where all students feel valued, respected, and supported in their learning journey. In local schools in Sri Lanka, inclusive education is yet to be fully introduced. However, a few Church Schools and government schools provide inclusive education.

According to the Ministry of Education's report on Circular and Guidelines on Special Education Assessment, "Although various measures have been taken to ensure the educational opportunities of Sri Lankan children, it is observed that there are children who have not attended school even for a day. It has been recognized that the majority of such unschooled children are children with disabilities and children living in diverse, disadvantaged environments."

According to the "Child Activity Survey (2016)" by the Department of Census and Statistics, as of June 30, 2016, 19,213 children were not enrolled in schools due to disability. The Salamanca Declaration and Action Plan, released at the UNESCO conference held in Salamanca, Spain, from June 7-10, 1994, proposed the implementation of inclusive education, integrating children of the same age into the general education process regardless of race, religion, caste, colour, language, and disability. The Sri Lankan government has also endorsed this initiative. Furthermore, as per the Compulsory Education Orders stated in Gazette Extraordinary No. 1963/30, dated April 20, 2016, it is mandatory to provide educational opportunities to all children aged 5 to 16 years.

Inclusive education is rooted in international conventions and declarations, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs). These instruments uphold the right of every individual to education and call for the elimination of barriers that hinder equal participation in learning opportunities.

Background

Inclusive education has gained significant global attention as a way to provide equal learning opportunities for all students—including those with special needs. Many countries, including developing nations, have adopted policies to integrate special needs children into mainstream classrooms. This shift toward inclusive education aimed to promote social integration and academic development for all students. However, implementing these policies has posed various challenges—such as inadequate resources and limited teacher training—that affect their effectiveness.

In many schools, special needs children often struggle to keep up with the general curriculum, while teachers face difficulties providing the necessary individualized support. These barriers have prompted ongoing debates about the best practices for inclusive education. The focus of this research—exploring the experiences and perspectives of those involved in inclusive education—sheds light on the successes and challenges of these efforts. Examining these narratives, we can better understand how to improve the inclusion process for special needs children.

1.2. Special Needs Education

Special needs education refers to customized educational practices and support systems designed to meet the specific learning requirements of students with disabilities or other special needs. This field of education ensures that all students,

regardless of their challenges, have access to quality education and can reach their full potential. Some children with learning disorders and special needs are unable to attend regular schools, yet they, too, deserve the opportunity to be in a regular school and learn.

Special needs education ensures that children with diverse learning requirements receive tailored support to reach their full potential. It encompasses various learners with various disabilities, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and developmental challenges and behavioural and communication disorders. The field of special needs education is dedicated to creating inclusive, supportive, and accessible learning environments that cater to the individual needs of every child, fostering their academic, social, and emotional development. Through specialized teaching strategies, assistive technologies, and targeted interventions, special needs education seeks to empower students and facilitate their active participation in education and society. In this context, understanding the experiences, challenges, and aspirations of educators, students, and families within the special needs education framework is instrumental in shaping effective policies and practices that promote inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all.

Farrell (2003) defined a child as having special educational needs if, during the learning process, the child exhibits learning difficulties that are not typical of other children of the same age. Additionally, Hallahan and Kauffman (2003) classified learners with special needs as those with hearing impairments, intellectual impairments, physical disabilities, and gifted children.

2. Research Questions

1. **Research Question 1**
   How does inclusive education impact special needs children's academic and social development?
2. **Research Question 2**
   What are the key challenges and best practices in implementing inclusive education for special needs children?
3. **Research Question 3**
   How does inclusive education impact special needs children's academic and social development?

The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action

The Salamanca Statement, adopted by over 90 countries, is a global guiding document for inclusive education policies. It outlines the principles and actions necessary to promote inclusion in education systems. Inclusive education offers a range of benefits for students, educators, and the broader community. Some of the critical benefits of inclusive education are:

For Students

Students learn to interact with peers of diverse abilities and backgrounds, fostering empathy, cooperation, and understanding. This helps them develop stronger social skills and become more inclusive and accepting. Inclusive education often involves differentiated instruction and tailored support, which can enhance learning experiences and academic achievement for all students, including those with special needs. Being part of a regular classroom can boost the confidence and self-esteem of students with disabilities as they engage with their peers and participate in typical classroom activities. Exposure to diversity in the school prepares students for real-

world interactions, where they learn to appreciate differences and work collaboratively with people from various backgrounds. Inclusive settings often set higher academic and behavioural expectations for all students, which can drive greater motivation and performance.

For Educators

Working in an inclusive classroom allows teachers to develop various skills and strategies for differentiating instruction and managing diverse needs. This experience can enhance their professional expertise and effectiveness. Inclusive education often involves collaboration with other educators, specialists, and families. This teamwork can lead to shared resources, support, and innovative solutions to educational challenges. Inclusive classrooms can foster a positive and respectful atmosphere where diversity is valued, leading to a more harmonious and engaging learning environment.

For the School Community

Inclusive education helps build a school culture that values diversity and promotes acceptance and respect among students, staff, and families. Schools that practice inclusive education often engage more with families and communities, which can strengthen partnerships and support networks. By integrating students with diverse needs into regular classrooms, schools can help reduce the stigma associated with disabilities and promote a more equitable society.

For Society

Inclusive education supports the principle of equity by ensuring all individuals have access to the same educational opportunities, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. It helps build a more inclusive society by encouraging the acceptance and celebration of diversity from an early age. Students who experience inclusive education will likely become

more empathetic, open-minded, and socially responsible adults, contributing positively to society.

Inclusive education supports the development and success of individual students and enriches the educational experience for everyone involved, fostering a more understanding and cohesive society. Inclusive education supports the development and success of individual students and enriches the educational experience for everyone involved, fostering a more understanding and cohesive society.

Research Question 1
How does inclusive education impact special needs children's academic and social development?

Inclusive education plays a significant role in enhancing both the academic and social development of special needs children. Academically, it provides opportunities for these students to access the general curriculum alongside their peers, fostering a more stimulating learning environment. This exposure allows them to develop academic skills at their own pace while benefiting from differentiated instruction tailored to their unique needs. Teachers in inclusive settings often employ various strategies, including individualized education plans (IEPs), adaptive technologies, and collaborative teaching methods catering to diverse learning styles.

Socially, inclusive education promotes interaction between special needs children and their typically developing peers, leading to greater social integration and acceptance. These interactions help special needs children develop communication skills, build friendships, and enhance their self-esteem. Studies

have shown that inclusive classrooms create a sense of belonging, crucial for emotional well-being. Moreover, peers without disabilities also benefit by learning empathy, tolerance, and cooperative behaviours. However, inclusive education's success in impacting academic and social development depends on proper support systems, such as trained teachers, adequate resources, and collaborative partnerships between educators, parents, and specialists.

Research Question 2
What are the key challenges and best practices in implementing inclusive education for special needs children?

Implementing inclusive education for special needs children presents challenges and opportunities for adopting best practices. One of the primary challenges is the lack of adequate resources, including trained special education teachers, classroom assistants, and adaptive learning materials. Teachers may feel unprepared or unsupported in meeting the diverse needs of students with varying disabilities, leading to frustration and suboptimal outcomes for the children. Moreover, rigid school policies, large class sizes, and societal attitudes that stigmatize disabilities further complicate the effective implementation of inclusive practices.

Best practices in inclusive education focus on addressing these challenges through comprehensive planning and support systems. Professional development for teachers is essential, ensuring they are well-equipped to implement differentiated instruction, use adaptive technologies, and manage a diverse classroom effectively. Collaboration among teachers, parents, exceptional education specialists, and psychologists is vital in

creating a tailored learning environment that meets each child's needs. Other best practices include smaller class sizes, co-teaching models where special and general education teachers collaborate, and fostering a school culture of inclusivity that encourages empathy and acceptance among all students. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the program's effectiveness are crucial to making necessary adjustments and ensuring the long-term success of inclusive education.

Research Question 3
How does inclusive education impact special needs children's academic and social development?

As mentioned earlier, inclusive education impacts special needs children's academic and social development by allowing them to engage in a diverse learning environment. Academically, children with special needs benefit from individualized learning plans and access to the general education curriculum, which helps them achieve academic goals alongside their peers. Socially, these children learn essential interpersonal skills, such as communication and collaboration, by interacting with their typically developing peers in a supportive setting. This inclusive environment fosters a sense of belonging, encouraging special and non-special needs children to build relationships, increase empathy, and promote mutual understanding.

4. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore inclusive education for special needs children. The population for the survey included teachers, parents, and special education coordinators working with special needs children in public primary schools. I selected a sample of 20 participants from this population, consisting of 10 teachers, 5 parents, and 5 special

education coordinators. This range of participants allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the diverse perspectives on inclusive education.

I used purposive sampling as the sampling technique, which was appropriate for qualitative research because it ensured the selection of participants who were directly involved in or knowledgeable about inclusive education for special needs children. This technique ensured that the selected individuals provided in-depth insights based on their experiences.

I obtained ethical clearance from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to comply with ethical guidelines. I informed participants about the study's objectives, and they provided informed consent. I also guaranteed their confidentiality and assured them of their right to withdraw at any point during the research.

I used semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions as data collection instruments. I interviewed individual teachers, parents, and coordinators to gather detailed personal experiences and opinions. The focus group discussions allowed participants to compare perspectives, facilitating a deeper exploration of shared challenges and best practices. I recorded, transcribed, and analyzed the data using thematic analysis, identifying key themes and patterns related to the impact and challenges of inclusive education for special needs children.

5. The challenges in implementing inclusive education

The challenges in implementing inclusive education are multifaceted and can impact various aspects of the educational system. One major obstacle is the lack of resources, including limited financial resources, shortages of specialized staff, and inadequate materials or technologies. These constraints can

make it difficult to meet students' diverse needs effectively. Additionally, insufficient training for teachers in inclusive practices and differentiated instruction can hinder their ability to cater to the diverse needs of students with special needs. Resistance to change from staff and parents can also challenge the implementation of inclusive education.

Furthermore, curriculum limitations and inadequate support systems, such as counseling, therapy, and special education services, can impede the effective implementation of inclusive education. Classroom management becomes complex in a diverse classroom with a wide range of abilities, posing additional challenges for teachers. Traditional assessment techniques may not fully assess all students' abilities, particularly those with disabilities or learning differences, leading to assessment challenges. Moreover, involvement and collaboration among teachers, parents, specialists, and students can be challenging, especially in schools with limited resources or time constraints. Broader societal attitudes and stigma regarding differences and disabilities can influence the efficacy and acceptance of inclusive practices.

Navigating legal requirements and policies related to special education and inclusivity adds another layer of complexity. Schools must ensure compliance with regulations while striving to meet the needs of all students. In summary, addressing these challenges is crucial to creating an inclusive educational environment that effectively caters to the diverse needs of all students.

Successfully tackling these obstacles requires a multifaceted approach that includes careful long-term planning, continuous training and professional development, and regular assessment

and adaptation of methods. To ensure a nurturing and successful learning environment for all students, schools must cultivate an atmosphere that embraces diversity, allocates resources appropriately, and engages all stakeholders to create a supportive and effective learning environment.

6. Methodology - Narrative Inquiry

This study is conducted using a small narrative inquiry involving one teacher named Taniya and a student named Raashan (their real names have been hidden for privacy reasons). Narrative inquiry is a methodology in which stories are used as data (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chik, 2014). It seeks to unravel how people understand events and make meaning through their experiences (Sonday, Ramugondo, & Kathard, 2020). Narrative inquiry began to receive significant attention in education as a research methodology following Connelly and Clandinin's work in 1990 (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry is a part of the qualitative approach where the researcher aims to understand the participant(s)' stories through interviews or memos (Polkinghorne, 2005).

7. Trustworthiness

The researcher asked for the participant's evaluation of the data interpretations made by the researcher to guarantee the trustworthiness of the research. All data presented in this research came from the participants without any influence from other parties.

8. Discussion and Evaluation

Case studies and success stories serve as powerful tools for understanding the real impact of inclusive education. I want to share a touching narrative about Taniya, a dedicated teacher who supports special needs children at a Church School. In this story, we also meet a remarkable student thriving in the same inclusive environment. This narrative will shed light on effective

strategies for implementing inclusive education and the incredibly positive outcomes it brings.

Taniya, a teacher with more than 15 years of experience working with children with special needs, expressed her views that no two people are the same and that how we grasp and learn is different. She is currently working with around 15 students at a private school in Colombo who have been identified as having learning disabilities. Some of these children are diagnosed with ADHD and ASD. While children with ASD and ADHD can be part of an inclusive class, their learning requirements are different. Taniya believes that the primary task is to engage these students in the teaching-learning process, which often requires an additional spark to capture their attention. She also noted that creatively designed teaching materials can help engage them. Providing personalized attention and carefully tailored content ensures these students thrive.

Taniya stressed the need for well-trained educators who understand the unique needs of these students and can adapt their teaching methods accordingly. She also highlighted the value of using technology, such as touch boards and tablets, to enhance these students' learning experiences in a typical classroom setting.

Taniya noted that the students she works with have displayed notable progress throughout 2024. Their academic progress has been meticulously monitored, and with the unwavering support of both parents and dedicated teachers, these students have the potential to excel in their educational journey. Taniya firmly believes that with continuous backing, these students can succeed by passing the national examination in at least six subjects.

Raashan's parents encountered challenges when trying to secure admission for him to a regular school due to his vision disorder and ASD spectrum diagnosis. Eventually, he was admitted to a church school. According to Ramani, Raashan's mother, Raashan initially struggled to pay attention and work alongside his peers. Reports from psychologists provided valuable insights to the teachers, enabling them to understand Raashan's needs and provide appropriate support, as his cognitive development did not align with that of the other students in the class. With the help of dedicated teachers and a shadow teacher, Raashan has made significant progress.

Lessons were customized to suit his needs, and special attention was given to him. Gradually, he adapted to the school environment. His peers offer him much support in class and on the playing field. Currently, in grade seven, Raashan is part of a class of about 32 students studying 12 subjects. He has shown steady improvement in his language, mathematical, communication, and social skills. He can complete his monthly and weekly evaluations with extra help. His progress in a regular classroom setting has been remarkable. The use of tailored creative lessons has resulted in academic improvement, and in 2023, he was recognized for showing progress throughout the year. Additionally, he has made strides in extracurricular activities such as cricket and football and has been warmly embraced by his peers. Raashan's positive development in a regular classroom proves that children with special needs can thrive alongside their peers.

In conclusion, inclusive education is a transformative approach that recognizes the diverse needs of all students, promoting equal access to quality education regardless of their

backgrounds, abilities, or disabilities. Inclusive education ensures that all students, including those with disabilities, have the right to participate fully in the educational process, fostering a sense of belonging and community. It is evident from the stories mentioned above that children with special needs can thrive within a regular classroom. Inclusive education has the potential to positively impact the academic and social development of children with special needs, provided that the necessary support systems are in place. It promotes academic success and the development of essential life skills and social competencies crucial for their overall well-being and future success.

9. Limitations and Recommendations

There are several limitations in the implementation of inclusive education.

First, the shortage of specialized resources limits the ability of schools to provide adequate support for special needs students. Many schools lacked essential tools, such as assistive technologies and specialized learning materials, which are necessary to meet the diverse needs of these children.

Second, the lack of teacher training posed a significant challenge. While some teachers had basic knowledge about inclusive practices, many did not receive sufficient professional development on managing diverse classrooms effectively. This limitation affected the quality of instruction and the ability of teachers to address the individual needs of students with disabilities.

Third, the large class sizes in many schools restricted the implementation of inclusive education. Teachers found giving personalized attention to special needs students challenging, hindering their academic and social development. Smaller class

sizes would have been more conducive to fostering an inclusive environment.

Fourth, societal attitudes and misconceptions about disabilities created barriers to successful inclusion. Many parents, students, and community members held negative perceptions of special needs children, which led to stigmatization and resistance to inclusive education initiatives.

Finally, rigid school policies and inflexible curricula limit the ability to adapt to the specific requirements of special needs children. Schools often struggle to balance the general curriculum with the accommodation required for inclusion, creating inconsistencies in the educational experience for special needs students.

These limitations highlighted in implementing inclusive education can be considered as recommendations for improvement. By addressing the shortage of specialized resources, providing comprehensive teacher training, reducing class sizes, promoting positive societal attitudes, and adapting school policies and curricula to be more flexible, we can overcome these limitations and create a more inclusive educational environment for all students.

(dharshinisl@yahoo.com)

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Moral Rearmament and the Impact of Values Education in Sri Lanka

Rev. Vijayathasan Daniel Jeyaruban

Abstract

This research examines the influence of moral rearmament in Sri Lanka, focusing on the rise of materialism and competitiveness, particularly in the education sector, and how these trends have impacted moral values. The Grade Five Scholarship Exam, initially designed to support disadvantaged students, has morphed into a symbol of individual success and social mobility, fostering competition and undermining communal and moral values. The broader societal shift in Jaffna, where traditional Hindu life stages and Gandhian ideals have been overshadowed by materialism, is also explored. This paper suggests that Values Education, rooted in the principles of Moral Rearmament, could counter these trends, guiding Sri Lanka back toward a focus on community, cooperation, and holistic development.

Introduction

Moral Rearmament (MRA), a global movement that began in the early 20th century, emphasizes societal transformation through personal change. Founded by Frank Buchman, MRA promotes values of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love. In the context of Sri Lanka, rearmament also refers to the rise of materialism and competition, which have significantly altered the educational system and social values. Additionally, concerns raised by the community in Jaffna reflect the broader social

implications of materialism and the declining influence of moral education. One of the major issues is the heavy reliance on private tuition centers, where some educators allegedly refrain from completing school syllabi, forcing students to attend private classes. Religious leaders in Jaffna have urged restrictions on tuition during designated hours, promoting the participation of students in religious activities to foster spiritual growth and counter the post-war culture of violence. However, this proposal has garnered mixed reactions, further highlighting the complexity of the moral challenges faced by Sri Lankan society today. Historically, Sri Lankan society, particularly in Jaffna, was guided by communal values, drawing inspiration from Gandhian ideals and Hindu life stages. However, this moral foundation has been weakened by the relentless pursuit of material wealth. This paper explores the impacts of this shift on education, particularly through the lens of the Grade Five Scholarship Exam and proposes Values Education as a solution.

The Shift Toward Materialism in Jaffna

The growing reliance on tuition centers for exam preparation is a manifestation of this shift toward materialism. Many students, particularly those preparing for Advanced Level exams, depend on private tuition to succeed. This reliance reflects a broader societal trend of viewing education primarily as a pathway to individual success, rather than as a communal process that fosters social responsibility and ethical growth. Some teachers, allegedly, contribute to this by not finishing the syllabus in schools, encouraging students to attend their private classes, further intensifying the competitive, material-driven mindset.

Hinduism traditionally divides life into four stages: Brahmachari (student), Grihastha (householder), Vanaprastha (forest dweller), and Sannyasi (ascetic). These stages outline a progression from learning and family life to spiritual renunciation. However, in modern Jaffna, this progression is rarely observed. Even in their later years, many individuals remain focused on accumulating personal wealth, delaying or entirely bypassing the spiritual stages of life.

Journalist Cho Ramasamy humorously observed that traditional caste roles have shifted in modern society, particularly in Jaffna. In the past, the Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders), and Shudras (workers) each had distinct societal functions. Today, Ramasamy quipped, everyone seems to have become "Thana Vaishyas"—solely interested in material gain. This mentality prevails among professionals in Jaffna, including doctors, teachers, lawyers, professors, and politicians, reflecting a broader societal obsession with wealth that undermines values of selflessness and moral responsibility.

Materialism has spread widely across all professional fields, encouraging personal gain over social responsibility. Even those who were once seen as pillars of the community—like educators and health professionals—are now driven by the desire for financial advancement. This has resulted in diminished community engagement and a growing divide between the wealthy elite and the rest of society.

The Decline of Gandhian Ideals and Spirituality

At one time, the people of Jaffna were deeply inspired by the simplicity and self-sufficiency preached by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi's ideals of non-materialism resonated strongly with the community, encouraging them to adopt vegetarian diets, avoid luxuries, and lead simple lives. SJV Selvanayagam, a significant political leader, embodied these ideals and tried to pass them on to future generations.

However, these ideals have faded over time, overshadowed by the pursuit of wealth. Selvanayagam's efforts failed to capture the imagination of the younger generation, as materialism gradually became the driving force in society. Political leaders in Jaffna, who once aspired to Gandhi's vision of public service, now prioritize power and influence, further alienating the youth from moral and spiritual ideals.

The political landscape in Jaffna has also contributed to this shift. Modern politics tends to elevate wealthy or connected individuals, pushing aside idealists. As a result, the younger generation lacks moral role models, while idealists are rarely recognized in public life. This makes it increasingly difficult to pass on ethical values, creating a vacuum that is being filled by materialism and individualism.

Furthermore, the embrace of Western consumerism, brought about through globalization, has played a role in the decline of Gandhian values. Imported luxury goods and lifestyle standards have gradually eroded the self-sufficiency that was once a hallmark of Jaffna's identity. This shift away from simple living,

coupled with the prioritization of wealth over spiritual and communal growth, threatens to further disconnect future generations from their traditional values.

The Role of Education in Addressing Materialism

In response to this, religious leaders in Jaffna recently appealed to the government to limit tuition classes during certain hours, particularly on Fridays and Sundays, allowing students to engage in religious and spiritual practices. This was seen as an effort to address the growing concerns of a violent culture, which has its roots in the 30-year war, and to revive moral education. Many religious figures support this initiative, recognizing its potential to instill human values and cultivate a more compassionate, ethical society. However, educators have voiced opposition, arguing that private tuition plays a critical role in keeping students focused on academics. They fear that without these classes, students may waste time on unproductive activities rather than engaging in spiritual development.

This debate highlights a key tension in Sri Lankan society: the balance between academic achievement and the cultivation of moral and ethical responsibility. Forced participation in religious observances may not be the solution, as true spiritual commitment must arise from personal conviction. Moreover, current religious practices in Sri Lanka, while widespread, often prioritize rituals over genuine ethical behavior, as illustrated in the story of the Good Samaritan.

The rise of materialism has not only affected societal values but also deeply influenced the education system. The Grade Five

Scholarship Exam is a prime example. Initially introduced to support disadvantaged students, the exam has now become a marker of individual success and social mobility. Students are pushed into a highly competitive environment, where academic achievement is equated with personal worth. This creates a narrow focus on exam preparation, with little time left for activities that nurture creativity, social responsibility, and spiritual growth.

This intense focus on academic competition has also reduced students' participation in religious and moral education. Once, young people in Jaffna spent time attending temples, mosques, or churches to develop a sense of community and moral grounding. Now, most weekends are consumed by tuition classes, which further entrench materialistic ideals at the expense of spiritual development.

The transformation of education into a tool for personal advancement, rather than a means of fostering communal values, has led to a generation that prioritizes wealth over service and spiritual well-being. The erosion of values-based education has created a one-dimensional approach to learning, where academic achievement is disconnected from ethical development.

Values Education as a Solution
Values Education presents a potential solution to the moral crisis brought about by materialism. By reintegrating moral and ethical teachings into the curriculum, Values Education aims to promote empathy, cooperation, and social responsibility among

students. In contrast to the current competitive, material-driven culture, this approach encourages students to see education as a way to contribute to the common good rather than merely achieving personal success.

Through Values Education, students can be guided toward a more balanced approach to life. They learn to view education not as a zero-sum game but as a holistic process that includes moral and social development. By teaching students to prioritize ethical decision-making and personal integrity, Value Education can help reverse the trends of materialism and competition, nurturing a generation of individuals committed to improving their communities.

Additionally, this approach aligns with Sri Lanka's multicultural religious traditions, which emphasize values such as compassion, selflessness, and collective well-being. By incorporating teachings from Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam, Values Education can resonate with students from various cultural backgrounds, creating a shared moral foundation for future generations.

Revival of Idealism in Jaffna
To truly address the rising tide of materialism, a broader revival of idealism is needed in Jaffna. This revival can draw inspiration from past movements such as the Moral Rearmament, which emphasized personal change as a precursor to societal transformation. Historically, MRA promoted values such as absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love, principles that

resonate deeply with the ethical teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam in Sri Lanka.

Unfortunately, the visibility and influence of idealist movements like MRA have diminished in recent years, both in Sri Lanka and globally. In India, once the home of Gandhi's idealism, the political scene is now dominated by individuals seeking power through wealth and influence rather than through moral leadership. This trend poses significant challenges to the revival of idealism in Jaffna and beyond. Without prominent role models who embody these values, it is difficult to inspire a new generation to prioritize moral integrity over material success.

However, the success of such a revival will depend not only on education but also on the involvement of community leaders, religious institutions, and political figures who are willing to lead by example. Rebuilding a culture of idealism will require collaborative efforts that bridge the gap between traditional values and the modern challenges facing the community.

Historical Moral Challenges: Greece, Rome, and Jewish Society

The moral challenges faced by Sri Lankan society today mirror those encountered by ancient civilizations such as Greece and Rome. In ancient Greece, for example, societal norms accepted morally questionable behaviors, such as relationships with prostitutes and mistresses, while marriage was reserved for procreation and managing households (Demosthenes, 1950). Similarly, in Rome, moral decadence was prevalent. Juvenal's account of Empress Messalina, who frequented brothels under

the cover of night, reveals the degree to which immoral behavior was accepted, even among the elite (Juvenal, 2004).

Jewish society, although generally more conservative, also struggled with issues like divorce, as Deuteronomy 24:1 allowed a man to divorce his wife on subjective grounds, creating insecurity in marriages (Josephus, 1981). These examples highlight how deeply ingrained moral issues can be, even in societies with established ethical codes.

Moral Challenges in Contemporary Society

In contemporary Sri Lanka, moral challenges persist, exacerbated by globalization and the weakening of traditional values. Rapid modernization has introduced Western concepts that often conflict with the moral teachings of Sri Lanka's religious institutions. The rise of moral relativism further complicates this landscape, making it difficult for individuals, especially young people, to navigate ethical dilemmas.

Values Education, grounded in principles similar to those of Moral Rearmament, can help address these challenges by reinforcing ethical behavior, promoting empathy, and fostering social responsibility. By providing a moral compass, Values Education can guide students away from the materialistic pressures of modern

In comparison to Sri Lanka, several countries have demonstrated a stronger and more structured focus on values education, integrating moral and ethical development into their national curricula. These nations place a significant emphasis on

fostering character building, civic responsibility, and social-emotional learning as essential components of their education systems.

Finland, renowned for its holistic educational approach, prioritizes well-being, empathy, cooperation, and respect for others. The Finnish curriculum embeds values education throughout, emphasizing critical thinking and ethical responsibility from an early age. Schools encourage student participation in decision-making, thereby promoting a sense of community and moral accountability.

Japan has a long-standing tradition of value education, known as doutoku or moral education. Japanese schools focus on instilling respect, empathy, responsibility, and harmony with nature. Group activities are integral to fostering cooperation, consideration for others, and the collective good, making values education a core part of Japan's holistic approach to nurturing responsible citizens.

Singapore has developed a comprehensive "Character and Citizenship Education" (CCE) program, emphasizing moral integrity, civic responsibility, respect, and resilience. Singapore's government recognizes the importance of values education in building a multicultural and cohesive society, ensuring that students develop both academic excellence and strong character.

South Korea integrates "Character Education" into its curriculum, focusing on respect for family, society, and elders, while promoting global citizenship and social-emotional skills.

This approach not only upholds traditional values but also addresses modern challenges, aiming to create well-rounded individuals who contribute positively to society.

Australia takes a structured approach to values education through its "Values Education" framework, which emphasizes care, compassion, respect, responsibility, and fairness. The Australian curriculum promotes an inclusive environment where students are encouraged to develop social and emotional competencies alongside academic knowledge, fostering responsible and active citizenship.

Similarly, New Zealand prioritizes values such as community participation, empathy, and responsibility through its "Key Competencies" in the national curriculum. The country's approach focuses on the holistic development of students—intellectually, socially, and morally—preparing them to be empathetic and responsible members of society.

In Canada, value education is integrated with a focus on diversity, respect for different cultures, civic engagement, and social responsibility. Canadian schools encourage values such as kindness, empathy, and sustainability, preparing students to be compassionate and socially conscious citizens in a multicultural context.

Lastly, the Netherlands emphasizes critical thinking, moral reasoning, and social responsibility as integral aspects of its values education. Dutch schools' foster discussions on ethical dilemmas, promoting respect, tolerance, and personal integrity, helping students navigate complex moral challenges.

These countries demonstrate a commitment to cultivating values within their educational frameworks, acknowledging the importance of moral and ethical development for both individual growth and societal well-being. In contrast, Sri Lanka's approach to values education could benefit from a more integrated and consistent focus, where moral instruction is embedded throughout the educational experience rather than primarily centered on academic achievement and competitive examinations.

Religious Observance vs. Human Values

The Good Samaritan parable serves as a reminder that ritualistic religious observance, while important, should not overshadow the core human values of empathy and compassion. In the parable, both the priest and the Levite failed to help the injured man because they prioritized their ritual duties over basic human kindness. This mirrors the situation in contemporary Sri Lanka, where religious observance may not always translate into ethical behavior.

Many community members participate in religious rituals, but human values such as kindness, empathy, and ethical conduct are often neglected in everyday life. This raises an important question: are religious rituals becoming more important than fostering genuine compassion and moral responsibility in society? The challenge facing Sri Lanka is not merely one of spiritual observance but of aligning religious practices with the cultivation of values that Contribute to the common good.

Conclusion

The rise of materialism, fueled by competition in the education sector and societal changes, has eroded Sri Lanka's moral values, particularly in Jaffna. Traditional spiritual and communal ideals have been overshadowed by a relentless pursuit of wealth, which has deeply affected both personal behavior and societal norms. The focus on academic success, as exemplified by the Grade Five Scholarship Exam, has transformed education into a competition that leaves little room for moral development. Furthermore, as the debate over tuition centers and religious observances shows, Sri Lankan society faces a complex set of challenges in balancing material success with moral development. Values Education, rooted in the principles of Moral Rearmament, can provide a framework for addressing these issues, fostering a more holistic approach to education that integrates both academic and moral growth. By promoting ethical decision-making and social responsibility, Sri Lanka can begin to move away from a purely materialistic culture and toward a society that values honesty, selflessness, and compassion.

However, by reintroducing Values Education and reviving movements like Moral Rearmament, Sri Lanka can reorient its focus toward moral and ethical growth. Through personal change, societal transformation is possible, helping rebuild a nation guided by values of honesty, purity, unselfishness, and love.

(danieljeyaruban@gmail.com)

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Importance of parishioners' awareness of the Diocesan Constitution for Good Governance in the Church.

Rev. Brian Fernando

Introduction

Development is crucial for the survival of a country or a society. The development should not be a mere growth of its economy. It should be a holistic development, and the indivisibility of the development is very vital. There are several parameters of holistic development. Those can be classified as follows,

1. Safeguarding human rights.
2. Access to basic needs.
3. Good governance.

The rule of law is a very important element around good governance which is an important component of holistic development. Awareness of the law, rules and regulations is essential if people are expected to adhere to it.

The Constitution is the social contract entered into by the citizens of the country setting out how they are to be governed, the governmental structure, how their human rights are to be advanced and shared values and principles. In short, it is the common understanding of the citizens of the Country on the rules and regulations of that country. Having a mutual

understanding is essential for the good governance of the country. This in turn will have an impact on sustainable development. Therefore, constitutional awareness of the citizens of the country or the members of an organization is key to sustainable and indivisible development.

Though a diocesan constitution may not reflect the above in its entirety, taking on face value it is essential for the effective functioning and good governance of the Church and the Diocese. In this paper, I focus on the Constitutions governing the Diocese of Colombo and the constitutional awareness of its members.

The present Diocesan constitution was adopted in 2011, and it has been authorized by the Bishop of Colombo. It has 17 chapters that contain basic rules and regulations important for the general governance of the Diocese and its constituent Parishes. Further for more specific and doctrinal issues it is expected to refer to the Church of Ceylon Constitution which is common to all Dioceses of the Church of Ceylon.

Objective of the study - This research tries to analyse the awareness level of a member of the Church of Ceylon, Diocese of Colombo especially about some essential chapters of the Diocesan constitution which deal with the day-to-day functioning of a local Church congregation and of the Diocese.

Limitations – It will not focus on the content of the constitution and its relevance to the members of the Diocese or the strengths and weaknesses of the constitution. The constitutional

knowledge level of the Clergy of the Diocese is not covered in this study.

Theological Reflection

First and foremost, the constitution is a Theological document. It reflects how the Church is looking at governance based on Biblical principles. It's worth noting that one of the objectives of the St. Paul's missionary journeys was to structure the church by establishing leadership. The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 is another example how rules and regulations were important in the organized structure.

In the Old Testament God's law is always at the centre of His relationship with His people right from the beginning. Even at the garden of Eden they were commanded not eat from the forbidden tree. That resembles the constitution. Then the people of God were given the 10 Commandments at the Mount Sinai. Furthermore, they were given Torah, the law to walk in the ways of the Lord. People's attitude about the law can be understood by the book of Psalms. The 119th Psalm shows that the law was not considered as a burden. But it was a delight (verse 92) and a means of peace (verse 45).

Jesus' attitude on the law can be examined by the following words.

 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. [18] For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means

disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. [19] Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17-19 NIV - Jesus also demonstrates the importance and validity of the observation of the law. But Jesus emphasises the importance of looking at the deep meaning and the Divine intention of the law rather than superficially following the law.

Therefore, good governance is part and partial of reign of God.

Methodology

I selected a mature female and a male who hold some responsibilities in the parish and the president of the Youth Fellowship from St. Stephen's Church, Rajagiriya where I presently serve and similar persons from another parish. Furthermore, I selected two young standing committee members, two Theological College students of the Diocese and two employees of the Diocesan office. All of them were interviewed individually and were given the following questionnaire.

1. Do you know about the Diocesan constitution? Have you seen it and read it?
2. Do you think knowing it is important?
3. What do you know specifically of it?
4. What more do you want to know and any suggestions?

To make more focused and easier to answer the above questions I further prepared the following basic questions from some of the selected chapters of the constitution of the Diocese of Colombo.

I.   What is the quorum of your Church AGM?

II.   What is the quorum of your Church SGM?

III.   How many representatives can be elected for the Diocesan council from your church congregation?

IV.   When do you elect the treasurer to the board of Wardens?

V.   When do you elect the Auditor to the Church?

VI.   When should be the notice of the Church AGM published?

VII. What is the composition of the board of Wardens/lay officers?

VIII. How many members are elected for the standing committee representing the Clergy and laity?

IX.   When can a Church AGM be held?

X.   Who can participate for a PCC meeting?

XI.   How many persons can the Bishop of Colombo appoint for the annual Diocesan council?

XII. How many persons can the standing committee appoint for the annual Diocesan council?

XIII. If 2 members are elected for the Diocesan council what should be their ages and gender?

XIV. Who should publish the notice of the Church AGM?

XV.   Who has the voting rights in the wardens' meeting?

Through this I hope to analyse their level of Constitutional awareness and to propose some practical solutions to meet what is lacking.

The analysis

The people whom I interviewed almost all knew that there was a Constitution for the Diocese, and they had seen it and some had read it also. All of them thought that knowing the constitution was very important. All of them stated that they had understood the importance of knowing the constitution and shared their intention of studying it in future.

Most of the people knew the number of their parish Diocesan council representatives. It is encouraging to see two interviewees including a Theological College student gave satisfactory answers to more than 10 questions out of 15.

But it was interesting to see that no one knew the exact no of the quorums of their church AGM and the SGM. I think it is a basic knowledge, but they didn't have even that basic knowledge. Also no one knew the exact date to publish the notice of the Church AGM. And no one was aware of the exact composition of the wardens' meeting and of the parochial Church Council (PCC) meeting. Also no one was aware of the eligible period for an AGM to be held.

It was alarming and shocking to understand that no one knew the exact answers for nine questions out of 15. The answers for other questions were also not satisfactory. Some didn't know the answers even for the basic questions such as the occasion

where the treasurer or the auditor was appointed. It was a pity that even some standing committee members didn't aware the number of lay and Clergy representatives appointed for the standing committee at the annual Diocesan council sessions.

Another important fact to remember is that this research was carried out around Colombo and environs where there are many elites and educated. But the awareness level should be lower in the remote peripheral areas of the Diocese

Suggestions came through the interviews

The reason why people do not opt to read the constitution is that it is very complicated for an ordinary person and cannot be understood by his/her own. They suggested to make the constitution simple and easy to understand and user friendly. They said that the knowledge of the constitution was important because it helped to safeguard the rights, privileges of the people and to explore the opportunities it offers. Also, they shared the instances where certain people unconstitutionally dominated the parish without giving others any opportunity misusing the constitutional ignorance of the people. Further they shared the instances where the conflicts could have been prevented if the constitution was followed properly.

One young girl shared another drawback to read the constitution as a child was that the children have no place in the constitution. For all the Church administrative matters only those who are over eighteen years can participate. So she suggested to revise it

to 15 years of age to have rights to engage in the Church administration.

Future research areas
I didn't not Interview the Clergy who have given vows at their ordination to uphold the constitution and who are responsible for carrying out the administration of the parish congregations and of the Diocese according to the constitution. It would be interesting to see their level of Constitutional awareness.

Today in Sri Lanka the constitutional experts as well as the public speak of going for a more people centred new constitution for the country. So going in that line I think it is advisable to carry out another research in the future on the content of the Diocesan constitution, its strengths and weaknesses and its relevance to its members. Then we can think about the need of a new constitution for the Diocese.

Therefore, the last two points are kept for future research and studies.

The Conclusion
This research was simple research limited only to the sample area of few individuals in Colombo and environs. But it opens the relevance and the curiosity of extending it to the whole Diocese to come to conclusions based on more reliable and justifiable facts.

But we can conclude through this research is that the overall constitutional knowledge level is very low among the members

of the Diocese and not satisfactory. Therefore, one can raise suspicion whether the administration is done according to the constitutional recommendations throughout the Diocese. Also, it cannot be checked by the laity as their awareness level is low. Sometimes it could be considered dangerous by the administrative authorities to raise the constitutional awareness level of the public as the authorities then cannot act according to their own ways. Therefore, the steps should be taken to raise the awareness level of the parishioners by the recommendations suggested below or any other way to ensure good governance hence to lead the Diocese into sustainable and holistic development.

Recommendations based on observations

Since it is evident from this research that the awareness level of the Diocesan constitution by its members is not up to the level that is expected it is necessary to raise the awareness level. To meet this requirement, I think it is important to conduct awareness/ educational programs in parish level by the experts of the subject. This should not be a one-off thing but as an ongoing activity.

1. Since the participants for the interviews suggested to make the constitution simpler and user friendly, I further suggest making a handbook to the constitution which deals with the basic rules and regulations pertaining to the day-to-day functioning of the Church. Another hindrance for people to read the constitution is that the mentality of the people. They think that the constitution is

only for the lawyers and the legal experts and not for the ordinary people. Therefore, it is necessary to make the constitution more attractive to use and read.

2. I suggest forming a Constitutional committee in each Church congregation and to meet regularly to discuss about the constitutional matters related to the Church and the Diocese and even related to the country. Whenever a conflict or an issue occurs the priest can refer these matters to that committee to discussed and give recommendations.

3. Having a child-friendly version of the constitution is another radical approach to a constitution.

(brian.chamila@gmail.com)

Equitable opportunity for Religious Education in day schools of Sri Lanka

Sudeni Perera

The Objective of the Research - Considering the right for Equitable Opportunity for Religious Education in day schools this research measures the opportunity available for Christian Children to study religious education in government schools in Sri Lanka.

Research Aim - To bring to the attention of government institutions, Religious Leaders (Christian Leaders), School Teachers and parents with regard to the lack of equal opportunity for the children regarding religious Education. To encourage Christian Religious Leaders to stand for their communities and to make parents and children aware of the opportunities available for them through a special circulars and gazettes.

Research Methods -The qualitative method is used for this research, and I have done a few informal oral interviews, online interviews, field visits experiences, observations and personal experiences. Data collected via available online videos, statistics from National Institutions, available research papers and websites.

Introduction

I am being the Coordinator of the Church of Ceylon Board of Christian Education Diocese of Colombo, would like to present my research on "Equitable opportunity for Religious Education in

day schools of Sri Lanka." as I have been working in the field of children's Spiritual Education for the last 30 years.

With my experiences this essay looks to the needs of the Christian children, as they face serious challenges to study Christianity (Non-Roman Catholic- NRC) in their day schools. Though Sri Lanka is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country, the majority of Sri Lankans are Buddhist (70.2%). According to the Reformulate Chapter 11, Article 09 of the current Constitution "*The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give all religions equal status. The state shall protect and foster Buddhism and the Buddha Sasana while assuring to all religions the right granted by Article 10 and 14(1)(e) of the current Constitution*[153].

During the past decades, Sri Lanka has faced many ethno-religious conflicts, and this has badly affected our younger generations. Therefor it is high time for government authorities to pay attention for the religious education of the children and bring equality and justice to all the children of all religions. When a child is taken to be admitted to a school, parents have to state their religion, and if there are 15 children or more for any given subject in a school, the school's governing body should provide a teacher for that particular subject (Circular Number 2012/03). At present most of the government authorities have not paid attention to the shortage of school Teachers for minority religions

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[153] https://law.nus.edu.sg/wps/.

of the country even though there are 7.4% Christians, 9.7% Muslims and 12.6% Hindus in Sri Lanka. [154]

When we say "Christian", in Sri Lanka there is a visible division among the Roman Catholic (RC) community and the Non-Roman Catholic Community (NRC). Most schools are ready to provide teachers for the RC subject, but not to the NRC subject. Not only providing teachers, but when it comes to school Admissions, NRC children were severely rejected or overlooked by the school administration. Due to this situation a child experiences inequality and a violation of their rights.

Considering the above situation, it is important that the Church Leaders, the Governing bodies of Christian Schools, government authorities and Christian children and parents to be aware of their responsibilities and rights in regard to this situation. I would like to propose some suggestions to be implemented as individuals or groups. Using my experiences and understanding of the need of our nation, I have taken this opportunity to be a voice for the voiceless children and parents, and to further research on "Equitable opportunity for Religious Education in day schools of Sri Lanka."

1. What is it be "Equitable"?

"It is to be fair and reasonable; treating everyone equally", it further goes on to say, "the equitable distribution of resources" (Oxford Learners' Dictionary). What does equitability have to do

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[154] *Ayesha Wijayalath, Constitutional Contestation of Religion In Sri Lanka, working paper 18/3, May 2018.*

with religious education in day schools? To further understand the link between the two, let us take a look at these statistics; According to a survey done in 2021, there are 10,155 registered government schools in Sri Lanka. 373 National schools and 9,782 Provincial schools under the Ministry of Education. Of those who opt to attend these schools, many are from the majority religion of the country, and only a small percentage of these children are from the minority religions. As religion is a compulsory school subject of the General Certificate of Education, Ordinary Level, and Religious Education subjects are available for the Advanced Level Examination as well, the importance and significance of the said subject is amply visible.

Article 28 of the UNCRC says that children and young people have the right to education no matter who they are: regardless of race, gender or disability; if they are in detention, or if they are a refugee.[155]

The right to education is a vital and important human right, and all our children deserve this statement to be true. Article 28 (1) says that qualitative dimension reflects the rights and inherent dignity of the child; it also insists upon the need for education to be child-centered, build child-friendly and empowering and it highlights the need for educational process to be based upon the very principles it enunciates. Article 29 (1) further states that State parties agree to be considered that education should be directed a wide range of values, and it overcomes the boundaries of religion, nation and culture understanding that children are

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[155] (https://www.cypcs,org.uk)

capable of playing a unique role in bridging many of the differences that have historically separated groups of people from one another.

Children face a lot of psychological challenges since they don't belong to the major religion of the school. They may be compelled to do something that they may not want to do. For some children it may be a very challenging fact to face early on in life, as it is added pressure and obstacle to attending school. Some schools offer students the chance to make a choice, while others do not provide that freedom, but forcefully encourage all children to be a part of the majority religion general assembly.

2. Is religious education needed in schools?

Japan does not require their students to take a course on religion. Primary and secondary education in Japan don't normally offer courses on religion either. Religion doesn't come in the list of required subjects in Japanese schools. Public schools need to be perfectly neutral about religions.[156]

In England it is compulsory for all state-funded schools to teach religious education (RE). However, it is not a part of the national curriculum, and parents have a legal right to withdraw their children from all or part of the lessons. Pupils can choose to withdraw themselves once they are 18 years old[157]

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[156] https://www.quora.com
[157] https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk

In Sri Lanka, according to the Vision and Mission of the Department of Religions and Value Education, it is to provide a high level of religious and value education that is full of religious harmony. There are a few more important responsibilities that they have to see as given below. Furthermore, it says that the aim of the department is to create a virtuous and honest society, in order to improve the overall efficiency of the National Institute of Education.

1. High level of Religious and value Education.
2. Bring Religious harmony.
3. Realizing unique skills of the school community.
4. Promotion of Values.
5. Preparing Common curriculum framework for all religions which is suitable for Sri Lanka.
6. Preparing the syllabus and modules.
7. Introducing religious concepts is necessary for the promotion of values.
8. Working harmoniously with all brother religions.
9. Teaching religious subjects to school students.
10. Providing resources/services to the Ministry of Education and Examination Department.
11. Planning subject teacher - training programmes.
12. Provide Resources to subject promotion activities, evaluation activities, subject monitoring services.[158]

Going through the above list of the Vision and Mission statements of the Department of Religions and Value Education, it is clear that they are ready to provide a number of services to

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[158] nie.ac.lk/department

the state schools in regard to Religious Education. If these services would be provided to the major Religion as well as minority Religions equally, the productivity of the services would be much better, and it will directly impact the Education of the children and on their secular and spiritual wellbeing. If Sri Lanka, as nation expects to see a holistically developed community in every ethnic and religious group, the facilities should be shared equally. Through religious education, children will learn about the different religions and their traditions, practices and beliefs. Religious education also promotes children's tolerance and mutual respect in a diverse society.

Quote: "Teaching about faith supports inclusive leaning about religious diversity, builds empathy and inspires compassion." (Unknown)

The following are some additional positive impacts that would be added to the life of students.

a) **For Holistic Development**: It is beneficial that all children receive not only physical development and psychological development, but also development in areas such as social, emotional and spirituality. A holistically developed child will grow up to be a well-rounded human, benefiting society.

b) **In molding responsible citizens for the nation**: Since a state's school's goal is to build and put forth into society morally upright and good citizens, religious education can be seen as an important part in raising such citizens with integrity and values.

c) **To be able to practice one's own religion, while learning to respect other's faiths**: Growing and learning in a multi-religious society, as well as in an educational

environment will help our children to understand, experience, respect and value their peers' faiths and spiritual lifestyles.

d) **To build an ethically and culturally rich society with high morals standards and integrity**: When growing and learning in an educational community that is rich in culture and religion, it makes for a peaceable and accepting society, which leads to a more peaceable and accepting citizen.

e) **In helping to protect the environment**: Religious education helps children to build their relationship with creation and helps to protect and preserve it.

f) **In helping to be mindful:** Mutual respect for all human life will be at the forefront of all religious education.

3. **The perspective of parents and schoolteachers on religious education in day schools**

Out of a verbal survey conducted with nearly 35-50 parents, teachers and children, they equally stated that Religious Education is a great need in our day schools, and they all unanimously agreed that every child should get the opportunity to study their own religion. Since we have four major religions in Sri Lanka, it is a priority to provide teachers to all schools for each of the religions. If any school states that they do not have teacher for religion, the Faith leaders of that community can organize examinations in their Buddhist Daham Pasala's, Sunday School's, Madrasa or Islamic School's and share those results with the schools, to be add to their School Report cards. Faith leaders, parents, teachers and children should be aware of these possibilities, so as to have better options and benefits.

Some can raise a controversial point saying, "learning a religion in school can be stressful", "some extreme ideas can bring conflict between religious rituals or practices", or "some may try to underestimate another's religious rituals and practices." And at the same time some parents may think that it is better to remove the religious paper from the General Certificate Examination as the children are already dealing with 09 subjects with a heavy curriculum. The point could also be raised stating there is no purpose to spending the important hours during school for time for religious education, which that the family and their own religious leaders can fulfill the needs of religious education. If the citizens of this nation are really concerned about the number of subjects per grade or the content of the curriculum, it is better to reconsider the material of content and the number of subjects and change the curriculum accordingly. This should not mean that the subject of religion should be omitted from the syllabus. To challenge these biased facts there are a few points to be considered. In many schools' children may face difficult and harsh situations such as peer pressure, bullying, body shaming etc. or they may also be the guilty party to these acts, having an anchor subject such as a religious subject will help such students face troubles, as well as help them better themselves with the help of a religious education teacher or counsellor.

4. Solutions

a) The Government Responsibility regarding Religious Education in Day Schools

The Sri Lankan government has recruited 235,924 teachers in the year 2021. The student population stands at 4.2 million. Though we have teachers in schools for other subjects, there is a

lack of teachers in providing religious education according to the present requirements. When the Diocese of Colombo organized a meeting with the former Minister of Education, Mr. Akila Viraj, we got to know that though the Western Province needs teachers for Christianity they cannot recruit anymore teachers as their provincial quota was over due to the unsettled transferred of the teachers that had taken place, as well as the excess recruitment had been done in the previous years. Another reason for the lack of religious education in state schools can be linked to the lack of teachers who are qualified to teach the subject. It is an essential need to provide teachers for religious education as well as for the other subjects equally without being biased towards the majority religion. If minor-religion students do not get any opportunity to sit for the Ordinary Level examination and get through the examination with a minimum of a credit pass, they are then deprived of sitting for their Advance Level Examination for the same subject. If we cannot accommodate for children to study their own religion for Ordinary Level and Advance Level examinations, they cannot pass out in becoming teachers of religious education, and hence the cycle of the teacher shortage for religious education / Christianity in schools continues.

It is important to encourage Christian children and children of other faiths to strive to become religious teachers of the future, making way for such teachers to rise within the school education system to places of decision making. If only the majority religion is given preference, then the education system's foundation is based on a biased system where only the majority religion and its teachers are given opportunities to hold positions of School principals and administrators in regard to school education.

As per the "Status of Sustainability Development Goals indicators in Sri Lanka in 2017. Goal number 4 ensures Inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all. Goal 16 which reads "Promote peaceful and inclusive society for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels." These two points gives us an indication of the importance of having sustainable goals which are for all Sri Lankans, including children. It is clear that seen that religious education is directly connected to the social and ethical aspects of civil life, and the discipline of a nation.

It is not acceptable that the government may not have sufficient financial resources to provide additional teachers to state schools. But we need to take into consideration that the government has budgeted parliamentary expenses in the millions and a large percentage of the budget has been set aside for defense. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the government to provide the facilities needed for the children of this country, as well as finding the needed financial assistance for the same.

Institutions that are able to assist in creating avenues for change in the present scarcity of teachers and opportunities for children to study their own religion in day schools should step forward. All of us can forget the past and step forward with the following state institutions and authorities for a better future. It is their responsibility to provide teachers as well as providing the relevant Textbooks and Teacher Guidebooks for Christianity and other minority religions.

- National and Provincial Education Agencies and Institutions
- The Ministry of Education (MoE)
- The National Institute of Education (NIE)
- The Provincial Department of Education (PDoE)
- Zonal Education Officers (ZEOs)
- Divisional Education Officers (DEOs)

  b) **The responsibility of the National Christian Council – Sri Lanka**

The National Christian Council conducts a common Final Examination for children aged 16 years before their GCE Ordinary Level exams, it is a recognized examination in Sri Lanka.

Another examination conducted by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka is the Nation Christian Religious Knowledge (NCRK) examination (Dharamacharya). Christian students should be encouraged to sit for this examination as it is compulsory to entering the Training Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka. Another point to consider is that the person applying for the NCRK examination has to have a minimum of a Credit pass for their Ordinary. But due to the lack of schoolteachers for Christianity, the children are not able to take the Christianity paper for the O/L, and loses the qualification of sitting to the NCRK. Therefore, if NCC can speak with the government and make arrangements consider Common Final Examination as a qualified examination for NCRK most of the Christian students can sit for the NCRK. And also, the NCRK examination syllabus should also be renewed according to the present-Day Education standards. Hence these points need to be taken into considerable consideration by the NCCSL, so that the space for

more persons entering the education filed as Christian teachers is accessible and not an obstacle.

We have so many youths who can qualify to apply to the Education Colleges in Sri Lanka in the Sinhala and Tamil mediums, but they don't have the opportunity to enter these colleges because they don't have the proper guidance or the knowledge of the proper protocols to follow. Since most of the children are from rural areas their knowledge about the protocols is very low, and this needs to be improved on. We have to have a proper desk to give guidance to our children who are waiting to enter the Education Colleges.

c) The responsibility of Church leaders

It is a very crucial point that the minority religious leaders need to have a very important meeting with the National Authorities and the Education Ministry regarding this issue. It is important to follow in the footsteps of the Roman Catholic Church and study how they communicate with National level institutions and make their needs into a reality. As Non - Roman Catholic Christian denominations it is a need to unite and work towards the lack of Christianity Teachers for Day schools. While thanking the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka and the Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka for providing nearly 150 volunteer teachers to the state schools as teachers for Christianity, the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka and the Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka should collaborate and form a policy together, which have steps ranging from immediate goals, short term goals and long-term goals. These should then be considered to be taken up as a Parliament Act and these points should then be gazetted.

The Church has to use the skills of our ordained Clergy Persons to build up relationship with their nearest schools and gather the data in regard to the number of Christian children in these schools and the availability of the teachers for the subjects provided. The Church should prepare a common database with all this general information.

If Church would like to provide qualified teachers to the education field as Christianity teachers in particular, or as a teacher for any other subject, we have to encourage our students to gain the basic required qualifications to become a teacher. If any young person needs to be a teacher, he or she should qualify with National level examinations with the minimum requirements and their IQ knowledge should be of a high standard, as they have to compete with other graduate teachers. If we do not provide qualified teachers to the government schools, we cannot make any request to the government in appointing such teachers as permanent teachers nor can we help our teachers reach the highest standard of studies in their applied fields.

We should encourage our Christian children to become teachers. The teaching Ministry has slowly started to diminish from the Christian community, though the missionaries have provided ample and uncountable commitments towards the Education standards of Sri Lanka. Considering past 20 years, we don't see a great interest in Christian youth to pursue a career in teaching in the National Schools. If Christian's start to teacher in state schools, the opportunity for them to volunteer as Christianity subject teachers in their school will increase. The

following are a few points that churches can implement in the near future with the help of a group of youths and some Clergy persons who are interested in this subject.

1. Identify the issue: Lack of Teachers and the lack of Teacher Guidebooks and Textbooks for the children.
2. Do further research on this issue.
3. Pursue a serious dialogue aiming at solutions with the government authorities to advocate for conducive policies considering present and future situations.
4. As an immediate solution the churches can take initiatives in providing volunteer teachers and paying a reasonable amount to them as an honorary payment.

d) The Responsibility of Sunday school Teachers

Those in the Sunday school ministry should encourage and train students to understand the need and to take this as part of their Christian responsibility. That's how human values can be inculcated into society. Therefore, it is good to understand the desire that our civil communities have for their own religion and how every religious person wants their religion to be on par with the other religions. Considering the needs of Christian Children, Sunday school teacher can voluntarily help the children in their churches study the school syllabus and help them get through the examinations while maintaining the average marks in their class.

1. Sunday school Teachers can spend a few extra hours after Sunday school to help students cover the school Christianity syllabus and help them sit for the O/L examinations. It is not necessary to cover all grades, at least assisting in this manner from grade 9 onwards will

be of great help. (These classes could be conducted as hybrid classes at the convenience of both parties.

2. As most of the Sunday schools follow the Day school Christianity Syllabus for grades 10 and 11 in Sunday school, it has indeed been a great support to the children who have no teachers in their schools.

3. Teachers should encourage their children to read the Bible every day especially the books of St. Luke and Act as it is directly connected to the O/L syllabus.

4. Teachers should explain the Bible passage and should give more opportunities for the children to share their personal perspective in regard to the relevant Bible teaching as children will be required to provide relevant answers for the 2nd part of the examination paper in this manner.

5. Encourage our children to sit for O/L Christianity as a subject, even though they have studied Buddhism or Hinduism up to the O/L grade, the child has the right to ask for their own religion paper for the O/L examination before they sit for the examination. It is a statement passed by a gazette but most of the schoolteachers, church leaders and children are not aware of it.

6. Encouraging our children to sit for A/L Christianity / Divinity and creating career pathways in education for those interested in becoming Christianity teachers in schools.

7. Encouraging School leavers to follow a Bachelor of Arts and degrees in regard to Education in state universities and those who are able to, to pursue it at even a private university.

e) The Responsibility of Christians Schools in Sri Lanka – (Church Mission Schools in Sri Lanka)

It would be a great initiative if the Heads of the Church Leaders could get together and encourage the governors of the CSM schools to coach students in becoming Christianity teachers in state schools. It is high time to revisit the Mandates of the CSM schools and encourage the Christian Community to serve this nation using their knowledge and skills. Looking back on the history of our schools within the island, it is very obvious that the church has played an immense role in planting schools across the country. Given this, the state should consider the role that Christian's have played in founding the education system of the country.

"*The character of an educational system depends upon the character of the society for which it is designed*" Dr. C.W.W. Kannangara, Special Committee on Education 1940. Quoting this phrase Dr. Harsha Athurupane starts his Dr. CW.W. Kannangara memorial lecture on the 13th of October 2023. The citizens of the country see and trust that education is directly related to virtue and goodness. Educating a population is considered an admirable action. Teaching and learning are believed to be meritorious and virtuous pursuits[159]

Though the state has provided some kind of facility for the minority religions and especially for Christian children, when you compare this with the facilities provided for the major religion, it

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[159] *Dr. Harsha, 2023, Two Modern Adventures of Education, Economics and Ethics,* NIE, Pg 1

is much higher than the minority religious children have received. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Christian Community to come forward to bridge the gap at least in a small way while advocating the state to fulfill its duty towards all religions. If we cannot show equal recognition for all the children of this nation, then we cannot expect to have morally and ethically matured citizens for this nation.

Conclusion

It is imperative that we pursue this matter urgently with the new President, the Ministry of Education and department of Religious Affairs and make a request for them to consider providing enough teachers towards religious education and the non-RC Christianity subject. This would be a good opportunity for the new governors to take necessary action to rebuild the unity among the different religions and ethnic groups of this nation while providing equal facilities for every citizen. I hope and pray that we will be able to see unity among our nation and see equal and reasonable opportunities for every citizen. The newly appointed Prime Minister, Hon. Ms. Harini Amarasuriya speaking at a principal's workshop at Ananda College this week spoke on re-establishing the education system of the county, *"... education will be given priority.... the trust in the education system is broken, this needs to be re-established, parents have to have faith in the education system, there are huge disparities in the education system... need to make sure all schools deliver the best for all children ... regaining the education systems lost glory..."* it is important that the Church leaders and Christian organizations would collectively work for the betterment of our next generation irrespective of denominational barriers. We

should select a group of people who are willing to join with government Institutions and Authorities and are willing to work in formulating policies and strategies to build our future. "By raising this concern and highlighting the matter to the attention of those in authority and those responsible, we hope and pray that all our children have an opportunity of an equitable tomorrow." (boce@bishopofcolombo.com)

For further Reference:
https://www.interfaithamerica.org/article/teach-religion-classroom
https://www.servicesforeducation.com.uk/blog/schools/why-is-re-important-in-schools/
United Nation CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child
Note: I thank Ms. Esther Jansen Hathurusinghe who helped me to make my essay more reader-friendly.

The Role of the Church in Advancing Gender Justice: Exploring the Impact of Holistic Pastoral Approach for Women's Empowerment and Inclusion

Diana Joseph

INTRODUCTION

Gender justice involves fair and equitable relationships, mutual respect, accountability, and the recognition of every person's right to live their life to the fullest (Rhode,1989). It targets a wide range of injustices, including gender and economic inequality, gender-based violence, and other societal ills founded in unequal power dynamics. Gender justice is critical for creating a fair and inclusive society and is central to the church's purpose.

The church, as a foundational institution in society, holds significant influence. Israeli sociologist Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (1981) defines institutions as the processes and structures, along with associated regulative principles, that organize human activities into distinct patterns, addressing any society's fundamental and ongoing challenges. The Anglican Church, in particular, plays a crucial institutional role, with a strong constitution that enables it to protect and support its communities. Research by Tadeusz Jarosz (2015) further emphasizes how the church cultivates meaningful relationships

within the community, leveraging these connections to promote social and economic development.

Gender-based inequality has long been recognized as a major contributor to poverty, particularly among certain groups. This realization has led to a shift in development strategies, focusing on promoting gender justice and affirming the dignity and well-being of all life on the planet (Momsen 2003).

Theoretical Framework
International Theories to Support Gender Justice
Global frameworks and agreements that support gender justice, make it highly relevant to your theoretical foundation. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) serve as important international benchmarks in promoting gender equality and addressing discrimination. (Freeman et.al 2012).

The United Nations affirms the critical role of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding. Resolution UN 1325 calls on all government and non-government actors to prioritize increasing women's participation and to incorporate gender perspectives into all UN peace and security initiatives. (Klot, 2014)

Furthermore, the adaptation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, established in 2015, was designed to address a

wide range of social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the world while promoting sustainable development across all countries. Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Each of these goals plays an integral role in advancing gender equality. The SDGs are intended to be pursued collectively, ensuring that all countries can implement them effectively through their government platforms. (Cook, 2021).

In the world of work, many women, particularly those employed as care workers or working in Garmen industries, face workplace violence, especially sexual and gender-based violence. This issue has gained global visibility due to labor rights and women's movements. In response, the International Labour Organization adopted Convention 190 as a legally binding instrument aimed at eliminating violence against women in the workplace. However, only six countries have ratified this convention and Sri Lanka has yet to do so. (Boris, 2022)

These frameworks provide a legal and moral basis for the argument in favor of gender justice and protection from discrimination, serving as essential tools for advocates and policymakers.

Biblical Foundations to Support Gender Justice
Gender equality remains arguable in the Christian atmosphere. The Bible itself offers examples of such situations. But even the

culture played a role where women have not come into society and discrimination extended generation after generation but Bible also gives an example of such a story in advocating for justice, as seen in the story of Zelophehad's daughters (Number 26). When faced with the issue of their father's inheritance, God commanded Moses to ensure that the daughters received their rightful share, establishing a precedent for the protection of women's rights within the community.

The biblical creation story portrays both men and women as created in God's image, which reflects equality. Genesis 1:27 states, "So God created mankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

In early church years, women were discarded from holding any position in religious space Jesus had women disciples as per history women were not permitted to be witnesses in a court of law, nor were they to be counted in a quorum necessary for the formation of a synagogue congregation (CBE international, 2022). The inequality of women in entering the church also was not allowed. But Jesus changed the perception in the New Testament. Jewish women disciples, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, had accompanied Jesus during his ministry and supported him out of their private means (Luke 8:1-3).

According to Galatians 3:26-29, those who come to Christ by faith are entitled to partake in the inheritance, including non-

Jewish people known as Gentiles. This legal transaction establishes believers' permanent status as God's children, regardless of their background—Jewish, Greek, slave, free, male, or female. All are one in Christ, as equal heirs to Abraham's inheritance. This statement represents the focus of this research on the biblical basis of gender justice, demonstrating that from a biblical standpoint, equality is vital and that gender does not produce an inequality in value or worth.

The biblical texts provided serve as a compelling rationale for the church to embrace and promote gender justice, rooted in its theological foundations. These scriptures offer essential principles that not only affirm the inherent dignity and worth of every individual, regardless of gender but also challenge existing societal norms that perpetuate inequality. By grounding their advocacy for gender justice in these biblical teachings, the church can advance its mission of inclusivity and support for marginalized voices. This approach not only reflects the church's commitment to the values of justice and compassion but also empowers congregations to take meaningful action in addressing gender disparities within their communities.

Problem Statement

Gender disparity in Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, gender inequality remains a critical issue, particularly evident in women's limited participation in leadership roles. With only 5% representation in parliament (IFES, 2022), gender disparities in leadership are stark. Similarly, in the garment industry, women are often underpaid, reflecting a

broader pattern of gender-based economic inequality, as also observed in other South Asian contexts like Bangladesh (Paul-Majumder & Begum, 2000). Gender-based violence further exacerbates this inequality, contributing to the systemic challenges faced by women in accessing justice.

Despite existing legislation supporting women's rights, the predominantly male decision-makers in Sri Lanka's patriarchal legal system hinder real progress toward gender justice. This gap in access to justice underscores the ongoing struggle for women when they seek redress for rights violations. Additionally, the undervaluation of care work—primarily undertaken by women—remains a significant but often overlooked aspect of gender inequality. A 2018 ILO report noted that women in the Asia-Pacific region perform 80% of unpaid care work, four times more than men, further perpetuating economic and social disparities.

Lack of Female Leadership

Leadership is defined as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement. (Rauch & Behling 1984) Goals are set to achieve an ultimate vision of either an organization or institution, in a religious context being a Christian it is that we look for goals to attain what God's objectives need to be fulfilled on this earth, in a church a context the bible states that It is God's design to gather all creation under the Lordship of Christ (Ephesians 1:10), and to bring humanity and all creation into communion. Given the objective of fostering equality, both men and women must share equal responsibilities

in achieving this goal, including having women involved in decision-making processes within the church. Leadership in a church context is not solely about directing others but about serving and considering their needs to fulfill the goal of communal harmony. However, in many church denominations, women often face barriers to holding leadership positions. The acceptance of female leaders has frequently been hindered by socially constructed gender norms and interpretations of biblical passages such as 1 Timothy 2:9-14.

In the current context of Sri Lanka, women's leadership is often restricted to specific segments of church traditions. The biblical creation story portrays both men and women as created in God's image, which reflects equality. Given this, the exclusion of women from leadership roles is questionable. While Paul's letter to Timothy has its criticisms and lacks detailed context about the church in Ephesus and the circumstances under which it was written, it is important for human rights practitioners to critically examine the historical and contextual factors behind these statements.

It is worth noting that in Sri Lanka, historical women's organizations such as the Mothers' Union, YWCA and GFS etc., are often see senior women taking on leadership roles typically after their 50s. There is dearth of younger women in the executive boards of these organizations. This on one hand raises questions as to why young women are not attracted and leadership roles are not more accessible to younger women and

on the other hand going forward about the sustainability of such women organizations. Which doubtlessly has made a significant impact in the mission of the church and in wellbeing of women in general. There are debates that the leaderships of these prominent organizations are restricted to certain classes of society. The problem of inequality spills over even within.

Failure to Tackle Gender-Based Violence Inside the Church for the Communities

Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls globally. This goal is a critical part of achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls. While this is a global priority, it is equally important for churches to address gender-based violence (GBV). GBV affects both men and women, though women are more often the victims. It stems from unequal power dynamics within families, communities, and societies. (Milazzo, 2024)

In Sri Lankan churches, the issue of GBV has rarely been a topic of open discussion. Cultural norms, especially within the church, often emphasize prayer over action against perpetrators, and divorce is commonly viewed as unacceptable. As a result, addressing violence against women has not been a significant focus within most churches. Some efforts have been made, particularly by churches in the north, often due to partnerships with non-governmental organizations. However, these cases remain the exception rather than the rule.

Another aspect of GBV that goes unnoticed is the workplace harassment in the religious institutions. Explaining further, religious institutions with clearly defined line of authority can most certainly be the perfect breeding grounds for workplace harassment. Religious institutions such as church justify the line of authority with spiritual definitions. It is a set form of lifestyle. Most often such authorities are perceived as licensed by God himself. Victims are not encouraged to question, but on the contrary can be psychologically under duress to think that 'choosing to challenge' is a sin. Because it will surely tarnish the image of the institution. Most often women are the victims. Therefore, isn't it important to ask this question, is there anyone crying in silence?

Conclusion

The church, particularly in patriarchal societies like Sri Lanka, plays a crucial role in shaping social norms and values. However, gender inequality is also evident within the church itself (Musoni, 2022). In the Anglican Church in Sri Lanka, for instance, traditional gender roles persist, with women often relegated to caregiving and domestic tasks, such as those carried out by the Mothers' Union, while men dominate leadership activities.

From the above desk research and observation from the church, it can be derived that there is lack of women in leadership and practice equality within the Church. And in terms of addressing gender-based violence also has been silenced with the given

situation of the church and current practices. This study shows that women lack women empowerment and inclusion in society. Especially considering the church, despite women in Sri Lanka having played prominent roles in society in the areas of politics, education, and private sectors, But the questionable how well they have been placed in the church. Given the context of addressing the lack of empowerment in care service that was predominately carried by women, especially in the church context.

Women in the church continue to take on traditional gender roles that are socially assigned to them, rather than recognizing that men's groups in the church could also contribute to these tasks in service to God. Another key issue is the existence of a men's guild, while the equivalent for women is referred to as the 'Mothers' Union,' rather than a women's guild. This distinction raises concerns, as men in the congregation are not encouraged or taught to take on pastoral and caregiving roles, which are typically carried out by women in the church. This division of responsibilities highlights the lack of gender awareness within the church and reinforces societal gender imbalances.

Recommendations

Given the church's influential role in Sri Lankan society, it needs to intervene and advocate for gender justice, both within its community and in the broader social context. Addressing these issues within the church can create a pathway for wider social change and contribute to reducing gender-based inequalities.

There are examples from other countries where faith communities have taken proactive steps to address GBV. For instance, the Myanmar Baptist Church launched a project aimed at preventing GBV and promoting gender equality by equipping faith-based women leaders to become agents of change (Norwegian Church Aid, 2019).

To achieve a meaningful impact, the church must adopt a holistic pastoral approach to women's empowerment and inclusion. A few key recommendations include:

- Developing a church policy to establish a designated gender focal point responsible for addressing and communicating issues related to violence against women including workplace harassment.
- Sunday school syllabi, Confirmation syllabi and pre-marital counselling must include lessons on GBV
- Bringing appropriate changes to the constitution of Church of Ceylon to accommodate women leadership in the church.
- Organizing women's empowerment programs within the church to uplift and support women in the congregation.
- Providing leadership training and encouraging women through small and medium-scale entrepreneurship initiatives.
- Raising awareness and increasing knowledge among men and women in the church community about gender-based violence and the legal remedies available.

- Engaging men in acts of hospitality and teaching them to take on traditionally female roles within their families, helps to balance household responsibilities so that both men and women contribute equally to the care economy. The church can play a role in enabling men to practice these values.

This approach emphasizes both women's empowerment and the promotion of gender equality within the church community.

(dianajoe.csr@gmail.com)

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Further Reference

STATE OF THE EVIDENCE IN RELIGIONS AND DEVELOPMENT (JLIFLC) Chapter 5 (Religion, Development and Gender)

Sinhala

Tamil

Facing the Future: A Call to the Church to Support Adults with Disabilities

Christarine George

Introduction

I witnessed the heart-wrenching worry of parents who know their adult child will always rely on someone for care. The parents shared that, during his school years, they had managed to admit their child to a school that accepted him despite his diagnosis, where his basic educational needs were met. However, they emphasized the lack of life skills training, especially after he left school. Little or no attention was given to the challenges their child faced as a young adult, finding meaningful occupation and striving for a degree of independence.

Such cries from parents who have an adult child with disabilities are not uncommon. While the situation has improved with increased identification and intervention services (Grimes et al., 2021), this was not the case a few decades ago. As a result, many individuals lack proper diagnosis or intervention, which can make them feel like a burden to their families. Parents are deeply concerned about their child's 'inability' to achieve what others of the same age typically do (Gadomski et al., 2018), fearing that they may never contribute meaningfully to society. As they age, the uncertainty about their child's future casts an ever-growing shadow, becoming heavier with each passing year.

This is the unheard reality for many families in Sri Lanka who have adults with developmental or intellectual disabilities. These families are not only grappling with daily challenges but are also burdened by the uncertainty of what will happen when they are no longer around to care for their loved ones. Stories like these are not just common, they are heart-wrenchingly frequent in my work. This crucial need rarely receives the spotlight it deserves, and I am determined to bring it to the forefront.

As Christians, we are called to care for the most vulnerable among us, and it is imperative that we recognize individuals with disabilities as integral to our community and mission (Matthew 25:40). This reality highlights an urgent need for the Church to step forward in support of adults with disabilities and their families.

To better understand the pressing needs, we must first explore what it means to live with disabilities, and the unique challenges faced by these individuals.

Understanding Disabilities
Disabilities encompass a wide range of conditions, each requiring lifelong support and care to help individuals live fulfilling lives. These needs can be physical, developmental, intellectual, or emotional, and the unique challenges they present vary significantly among individuals (World Health Organization, 2011).

While many are familiar with conditions like physical disabilities, hearing impairments, and visual impairments, increased

awareness has also brought attention to conditions such as Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, and cerebral palsy, all of which can limit engagement in daily activities.

Some disabilities are more visible, while others remain less understood. For example, intellectual disabilities may include conditions like Down syndrome and developmental delays, whereas physical disabilities can involve mobility impairments or chronic health issues. Each type of disability demands specific forms of care and support, which can be challenging for families to provide consistently.

Despite growing awareness, many families in Sri Lanka still grapple with discomfort regarding disabilities, which can delay access to essential interventions. Limited resources and services, along with high costs, further complicate the situation for families seeking support.

As followers of Christ, we are called to be compassionate and understanding, caring for those with disabilities as Christ has taught us (Luke 14:13-14). This means not only providing care but also fostering environments of acceptance and inclusion within our churches and communities.

Societal Attitudes and Challenges

Adults with disabilities in Sri Lanka and their families confront a range of challenges, made worse by the lack of adequate resources and support systems. As these individuals age, their parents' anxiety about their future escalates, driven by the fear of what will happen when they are no longer able to provide care. This anxiety highlights a persistent gap in services that becomes increasingly apparent as individuals with disabilities grow older.

Historically, Sri Lanka had a limited framework for early identification and intervention. The scarcity of resources meant that many children with disabilities did not receive the necessary support during their formative years. However, there have been gradual improvements over time, with increased awareness and acceptance of individuals with disabilities leading to more families seeking help, while the number of professional service providers has also risen.

Despite this positive shift, there remains much work to be done to ensure that adults with disabilities and their families receive the comprehensive support they need. The Bible teaches us the importance of justice, especially for the marginalized (Micah 6:8), and as the Church, we must be advocates for these individuals and their families. It is our responsibility to promote fairness, inclusion, and long-term care solutions.

Social integration remains a significant hurdle. Many adults with disabilities struggle to form and maintain meaningful relationships, leading to feelings of isolation (Tang, 2020). Their inability to contribute to society through traditional means such as employment or independent living adds another layer of difficulty. Limited access to appropriate healthcare and community support compounds these challenges, leaving both individuals and their families in a state of constant worry.

Societal attitudes towards adults with disabilities further complicate their difficulties (JICA, 2023). Siblings and extended family members may view individuals with disabilities as a

burden, both financially and physically, which can strain familial relationships. The profound, unconditional love and care provided by parents are often difficult to replicate by others, leading to social isolation for these individuals.

In 1 Corinthians 12:22-25, Paul reminds us that "those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable." This verse can guide us as we reflect on how the church should perceive and support individuals with disabilities. They are not burdens to be borne but invaluable members of the community, deserving of love, respect, and care.

Current State of Services in Sri Lanka
In Sri Lanka, while there has been some focus on early intervention for children with disabilities, the services available for adults remain both limited and insufficient. Existing care facilities often cater primarily to elderly residents, with little consideration for the specific needs of adults with disabilities. This mismatch between available services and actual needs results in inadequate care for these individuals.

Facilities like the Cheshire Home (Cheshire Disability Services, n.d.) and Royal Nursing Home (Royal Nursing Home, n.d.) in Mount Lavinia provide basic accommodation, primarily for elderly residents, with little consideration for adults with disabilities. Adults with disabilities often find themselves placed in these elder care homes, where they feel out of place, and their specific needs go unmet. A resident of such a home once said "everything is nice here, the staff are nice, but I don't have any friends". Although caregivers are often kind-hearted, they

frequently lack the specialized training necessary to address behavioral or developmental challenges.

For instance, a 40-year-old man with Down syndrome was placed in an elder care home due to a lack of alternatives. His behavioral issues were not well managed, leading to frustration both for him and the other residents. This situation illustrates the broader issue of insufficient training and resources in existing facilities, leading to both inadequate care and resentment from other residents.

Several other homes are listed as disability-friendly on the internet, but individuals are still constantly struggling to find a reasonable residential care setting for their family members with disabilities.

In contrast, programs like the Hands of Hope Centre in Colombo 6, a project of St. Paul's Church Milagiriya, provide targeted support for teenagers and young adults with intellectual disabilities. They focus on skill development, creating an environment where participants can contribute meaningfully to society and learn to live more independently. While such programs are commendable, they are relatively few in number. Many adults with disabilities remain without access to adequate support, often due to a lack of awareness, financial constraints, or practical issues like transportation.

Several other such institutions cater to large crowds where certain important aspects such as challenging behaviors can be neglected or addressed incorrectly. Behavioral challenges that were not properly managed during childhood often persist into

adulthood, making them more difficult to modify. Skill development programs typically do not focus on behavior modification, leaving both individuals and families struggling to cope with these challenges, unsure of how to address them. Professional services to manage behavioral concerns are both expensive and scarce, further limiting access to the support that families need. This lack of focus on behavior often leads to limited benefits from these programs, resulting in frustration for both individuals with disabilities and their families.

This reality points to a fundamental truth found in 1 John 3:18: "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth." The Church is called to be a living witness to God's love through action. By supporting such programs or creating new ones, the Church can be a powerful advocate for adults with disabilities and their families.

What the Church Can Do
The Church has a pivotal role to play in addressing the challenges faced by adults with disabilities in Sri Lanka. Given the unique vulnerabilities of these individuals, and the struggles constantly faced by their families, the Church can provide spiritual, emotional, and practical support that complement existing services. This is not merely an option for Christians, but an obligation, deeply rooted in our faith. The Bible repeatedly calls us to care for the marginalized and those in need, as seen in James 1:27, where we are urged to look after 'those in distress'. While the Sri Lankan society is increasingly aware of the needs of adults with disabilities, the resources available are still far from adequate. The Church must step in to fill these significant

gaps in care, recognizing that this responsibility is a reflection of Christ's teaching to serve the least of these (Matthew 25:40). Supporting the most vulnerable is not an optional aspect of Christian life but a core expression of our love and obedience to God.

1. Establish Specialized Care Homes

Specialized care homes designed specifically to support the needs of adults with disabilities are desperately needed in Sri Lanka. Currently, many adults with disabilities are placed in elderly care homes, where they feel out of place and their specific needs go unmet. By establishing homes with facilities tailored to adults with disabilities, the Church can create a nurturing environment that addresses their physical, emotional, and social requirements of these individuals. This would not only improve the quality of care but also enhance their overall quality of life, as their unique needs would be properly addressed.

While it is challenging to establish such homes due to limited resources, including finances, trained staff, and expertise, along with necessary services like physiotherapy and assistive devices, it is not an impossible task. As this critical need becomes more recognized, various options can be explored.

A parent once shared that, after approaching several church leaders for support, a leader from a different religion was the only one willing to implement the idea of specialized residential care. This should not be the case; as Christians, we should be ready to meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

One suggestion from a parent was to convert vocational training centers into residential care homes, as they already have a

foundation in place. Exploring various options can certainly help in formulating a plan that addresses the needs of those with *disabilities*.

2. Introduce Vocational Training Programs

In many countries, vocational training programs provide adults with disabilities with the opportunity to develop practical skills and contribute meaningfully to society. However, in Sri Lanka, opportunities for such programs remain very limited. Churches could step in by establishing mission projects aimed at training individuals with disabilities in specific areas or by supporting existing initiatives like the Hands of Hope program. Expanding these programs would empower more individuals to discover their sense of purpose and increase their self-worth. Additionally, these initiatives would offer crucial support to family members and caregivers by reducing the caretaking burden they often bear.

3. Train Caregivers

One of the key challenges faced by families of adults with disabilities is the shortage of trained caregivers. Churches can invest in training caregivers to ensure they are equipped to provide specialized care. This could include training sessions on understanding developmental disabilities, managing behavioral challenges, and offering emotional support. In doing so, the Church helps to relieve some of the pressure on families, allowing for a higher standard of care that is both compassionate and professional.

4. Raise Awareness

The Church is uniquely positioned to lead awareness campaigns within the community. By educating people about the challenges faced by adults with disabilities and their families, the Church

can help foster understanding, reduce stigma, and encourage greater acceptance. Such awareness efforts can create more inclusive and supportive communities, promoting social integration and reducing the isolation faced by individuals with disabilities.

Beginning with the Church itself, it is crucial for members to be educated on the basics of disability to set a positive example for the wider community.

While some programs have been held to raise awareness about disabilities, it is essential that these initiatives go beyond discussion and are followed by concrete actions. By doing so, the Church can help break down societal barriers and lead the way toward a more compassionate and inclusive community.

5. Advocate for Policy Changes

As a moral authority, the Church has the power to advocate for policy changes that benefit adults with disabilities. This could include pushing for improvements in healthcare services, access to social benefits, and legal protections for individuals with disabilities. A particular mention is needed about education. A child with disabilities has to compete with the children who are more advantageous in terms of abilities. Can it be considered as fair competitiveness in an exam. There is a dearth of approved teachers to assist such children at the examination hall. The media reported how two students with disability were treated unkindly by the invigilators at the 2023/24 G.C.E. O/L exams. Therefore, by speaking out for those who often go unheard, the Church can help drive systemic changes that improve the overall quality of life for these individuals.

6. *Organize programs with families of individuals with disabilities in mind*

The congregation must be equipped to not only accept people with disabilities but also embrace them as integral members of the Church family. This involves understanding the specific needs of individuals with disabilities and being sensitive to those needs when planning and organizing church activities. Programs designed to accommodate everyone, ensuring accessibility and inclusion, whether it is providing interpreters, physical access, or adapting events to cater to their abilities, would reflect a disability-friendly church.

Specialized programs for such individuals and families would also ensure that they feel valued and supported within the community. An excellent example is the Mother's Day program organized by the Colombo Gospel Tabernacle for mothers of individuals with disabilities. It was reported that the event was meaningful and touching.

Small yet impactful gestures such as offering to spend time with the individual so that the primary caregivers can get a break, can alleviate some of the burdens these families carry.

Aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Church's efforts to support adults with disabilities can directly contribute to several of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 3 focuses on ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages, which is highly relevant when providing appropriate care for adults with disabilities. SDG 4, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education, can be addressed by vocational training

programs that equip adults with disabilities with practical skills. Through raising awareness and fostering inclusive communities, the Church can also align with SDG 10, which aims to reduce inequality, ensuring that people with disabilities are not left behind. By addressing these goals, the Church not only fulfills its spiritual mission but also actively contributes to the global call for sustainable development.

Conclusion

The Church has a profound opportunity—and responsibility—to take the lead in supporting adults with disabilities. in Sri Lanka. By fostering a culture of acceptance, raising awareness, offering specialized care, and advocating for policy changes, the Church can play a transformative role in the lives of these individuals and their families. This mission is not only rooted in our faith, as in the teachings of Christ, but also aligns with global calls for equality and justice, such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

It is time for the Church to step forward, offering hope and practical solutions for adults with disabilities. As Christians, we must extend Christ's love and compassion to all, ensuring that no one is left behind. By committing to action, we can create a future where adults with disabilities are valued, supported, and fully integrated into both the Church and society. The task is challenging, but with faith, resources, and the willingness to act, it is certainly achievable.

(eichrisg6@gmail.com)

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The Education situation of the Oppressed Malayaga Students in the Hatton Tea Plantations

Lifniya Pradeep

''தொடுவானம் இனி தொடும் தூரம் என்ற முயற்சியில் வாழலாம். தோளோடும் ஒரு சுமை நுகத்தை தினம் எங்கள் தலைகளில் சுமக்கின்றோமே. நம் தலைமுறைகள் இருநூறு கடந்தாலும் தந்த வலிகளை மாற்றலாம் எம் கல்வியில்''

Objective of the Research

Malayaha Makkal are those who migrated from the southern part of India to Sri Lanka in the year 1823. They are socially, politically, economically, and educationally oppressed. Today, when we examine their educational status, there has been some progress during the past 20-30 years, but this progress is restricted to schools in the urban areas. The plantation schools still lag. Therefore, in my research, I have focused on data on the plantation schools and students surrounding Hatton town, which is considered as an educational hub in the Nuwara Eliya district and attempted to ascertain the reasons as to why the plantations schools are lagging.

Educational development of the Malayaha Makkal

Education is one sector which was elevated by the self-effort of the Malayaha Makkal. Education creates an individual's awareness, encourages self-discovery, teaches the values of life, and guides the upward movement. In the years 1823-1868, the children learned to read and write in the line rooms, due to some

interventions of the Kanganis (leaders of the plantation people). Line rooms were the primary educational spot of the Malayaha Makkal. Later, due to the insistence of the Christian missionaries, in 1869, the plantation owners were encouraged to set up a school, and financial assistance was provided. Teachers worked in schools till the afternoon and then worked as clerks in plantation offices.

A parliamentary debate in England in 1903 resulted in pressure for plantation owners to take responsibility for education. Meanwhile, free education was declared in Sri Lanka. In 1943 C.W.W. Kannagara was widely hailed as the "Father of Free Education" due to the report of the Special Committee on Education. But no one can deny that in his statement there is not a single word about the education of the children of the poor plantation workers, who have toiled to generate income to run the free education scheme.

In the year 1944, when the question of education in plantation schools was raised in a meeting C.W.W. Kannangara, who initiated a debate on the recommendations based on his report in the Ceylon Parliament, simply said, "It has been abandoned for the time being." Therefore, the education of the plantation children was left in the hands of the plantation management.

When the free education system was implemented in 1945, a situation was reached where the children of poor people could also get an education. However, the children of the plantation people were denied free education. Private schools were nationalized in 1960s, as far as the plantations were concerned,

Tamil sections were closed in many bilingual schools. After about 36 years due to concerted trade union action, the government was forced to provide educational opportunities to plantation children. Later in 1980's formal education system developed gradually. The government appointment of teachers was made available to the educated youth in the plantations. The number of educated plantation teachers gradually began to increase. The level of education was further enhanced by teachers trained through the Teachers Training Colleges and Sripada College of Education. However, with all these developments the children of the plantations comparatively remained backward.

Despite the excellent infrastructural facilities provided by the Swedish International Development Agency to the plantation schools in 2009; some remote plantation schools still lack basic facilities and are struggling to provide quality education.

Education in Hatton

Hatton is an education hub in the Nuwara Eliya district. Focusing on the Highlands College which has produced many intellectuals and university graduates in the Hatton region. From Mr. S. Thiruchendooran to the present principals, who play a huge role in the education achievements of this region. As the school is located on the outskirts of the city, the students who are studying get the best education and the highest standards. Students who have completed O/L exams and A/L exams get good coaching about what field to choose after their examinations, and which profession to choose after completing their studies. However, the condition of plantation school students around Hatton

remains a question mark. The students in the plantations lack knowledge and guidance about what to do after their examinations and after completing the advanced level.

Status of the plantation school students surrounding Hatton

"I won't accept defeat, I'm not that easy to beat" This is a powerful echo related by the students from the plantations. All plantation students are struggling with poverty in their daily lives. The monthly wages of many parents in plantations are nearly 15000-20000 per month. Many fathers spend half of their money on alcohol, this is a sad reality. Students drop out from Grade 11 to work in the plantations or in shops in Colombo to shoulder the burden of the family. Girls go to work in the garment factories to help their families. Although they obtain good marks in the ordinary level examinations, they seek jobs parallel to casual labor due to poverty. Parents also feel proud that their daughter/son earns twice as much as they are. There are many students whose dreams are dashed due to a lack of proper motivation and guidance.

When I was thinking about my research, I was thinking about a topic which would change the thinking of society. I remembered an incident that my father shared with me about ten years ago. My father owns a shop in Colombo. Due to the need for workers in the shop, he has told a person working in the shop to contact him if there is anyone who wants work. After some time, the man brought a young boy, he was almost 17 to 18 years old. He was asked to produce some basic documents, the boy handed over the file containing his certificates. My father was shocked to see his certificates and his achievements at the ordinary-level

examination. "Such a talented boy you are, what made you to seek an ordinary job in these shops, you have the talent to become a good engineer in the future", said my father.

The boy said, I am from Akkarapathanai (a plantation). I like to study, I managed to get A grades in five subjects including maths, and B Grades in other subjects without attending any special classes. Our school has classes till Grade 11 only. If we have to pursue higher studies, we have to go to schools in the town, we have to go to special classes, and we have to spend more money to study. My father is an Alcoholic, only my mother is working in the family and I'm the eldest and I have two younger sisters and a younger brother. My mother couldn't afford to make me study. Therefore, she said to go to Colombo like my uncle to work in the shops, where I can get a good salary.

My father asked him: If someone helps you with a scholarship to study, will you study? Yes, definitely I will study well; He said. At that time seeing the happiness on his face was a great feeling, said my father. Then the boy studied business with the help of a scholarship from a Trust called "Malayaha Kalvi manram" and now he is working in a bank. My father met him two years ago and he said his sisters and brother also studied well with encouragement and with the help of others.

After completing my Advanced Level education and while waiting for university I went to teach Christianity in a school in the plantations. There I had a good relationship with the A/L students, one day a girl like my age came to meet the principal, while talking to her I understood that she had been one of the

best students in the school and the entire school expected her to achieve the highest standards in life. Rather, she had to choose working in a garment factory in Katunayake.

When we analyze the lives of these two children, the students in the plantations have good academic skills, but poverty has compelled them to walk away in pursuing their dreams in the best possible way. There are numerous children on the plantation who have lost their dreams and worked just to live in the world. According to the understanding of the plantation children, they think if they fail in the O/L exams or A/L exams there is no future for them.

While exploring the answers as to why the students are deprived of for further studies? I met a principal and some students discussed the future of the children. Through the discussions and exploring the predicament of children we understood many reasons that hinder them from achieving their goals. I would like to flag 04 of them.

1.   Poverty

Poverty and hardworking are like inseparable twins in the plantations. They live in a ten-by-ten room, and they work very hard for the economy of the country. However, the monthly salary they receive is a meagre amount and it is a big challenge to provide family life with it. Therefore, they are forced to take loans at the end of the month. This will push them into perpetual debt. For the student's education becomes a challenge amidst hardships of life. They struggle to achieve their dreams in life, this leads them at some point to have a negative feeling about life.

Which even leads them to be addicted to alcohol and narcotics. Although many students have all the skills to study, poverty is a major barrier to their education.

2.   Peer Pressure

Deepawali, Thai-Pongal, New Year and Temple Chariot festivals are some of the most exciting celebrations in the plantations. Youth give great importance to festivals. Some students and youth who are not interested in studies go for employment in Colombo or nearby cities in Colombo, they come for these festivals and show off money, good clothes, new phones, and fashionable accessories to their friends and community. They portray an image that working in Colombo is good and can earn good money and live happily. But in reality, they suffer very much in small shops, hotels, garments, and garages. The school students who see their camouflaged lifestyle get attracted to their way of life and think pursuing studies under difficult circumstances is not worth as being employed in Colombo that can easily bring them a better life. Therefore, the youth who are employed in Colombo tend to negatively motivate and guide others, particularly the students.

3.   Irresponsibility of Parents

As far as the plantations are concerned, many parents are living in a small circle with no exposure to the outside world. Even if the children go to school or go to special classes, they are not able to help or guide their children in educational activities. In some families, parents don't know what subjects their child is studying, where they go for tuition, which is safe or not. In most of the homes in the plantations, when parents go abroad for

employment children suffer the most. When a mother or father goes abroad, the family relationship suffers, illegitimate relationships cause damage to family life. Many students are unable to continue their education due to conflicts within the family.

Children also suffer from depression due to the anxiety arising due to issues in their families. Girls are prone to abuse in and outside the family circle. Due to the lack of peace and love in the family, even children are driven into inappropriate relationships with the opposite sex. They seek attention and affection in their adolescent age and easily fall prey to anyone who shows them attention. All these problems occur due to the lack of proper parenting.

4.   Aggressive behavior of some teachers

Looking at the educational side of the plantations, although teachers play a major role in the development of education, it cannot be denied that there are some who are responsible for the failure and suspension of education of many students. Teachers who reside closer to the school are sometimes accused of using the students to run errands. Students are said to be discriminated against in the classroom if they do not go to the tuition class of the teacher. Students from the plantations are treated with less dignity and humiliation without any reasonable fact check in front of the other students. With a total disregard to the state of mind no sympathy is shown to the family problems. Slandering and exaggerating even the smallest mistakes of the plantation students is seen common. In addition, some teachers in plantation schools show caste discrimination among

students. They do not realize that it is a violation of the fundamental rights of children. They put undue pressure on students to record teacher achievement. Teachers tend to use abusive words towards children. These reasons have pushed many plantation students to detest schools, teachers, and studies. This has led the students not to give priority to education.

The following information was shared by the principal of a plantation school in the Hatton Education Zone

What is the status of students who pass Ordinary Level examinations? (O/L Exams)

Despite various challenges such as poverty, environmental struggles, and lack of a good family environment, students study well with the guidance of teachers. Many students have received good results in the O/L exams, 2 Students have received 9A's in all subjects. When we review the results of the past 2 years 30 students are eligible to do the Advanced Level Examinations. 15 students are selected for the university. In percentage vice 90% of girls show more interest in studies and only 20% of boys continue their studies. Even some students who can continue their studies bought three-wheelers with the retirement money of their parents and rode it. Their condition has changed due to a lack of proper guidance.

some students become addicted to drugs learning the bad habits from their friends from urban areas and lack of interest in education. Two well-educated students were waiting for university application forms/ interview letters. They didn't receive the letters on time, and they missed the interview.

Because even though 200 years have passed since the Indian Tamils came to Sri Lanka, there is still no permanent address for them. All incoming letters will go to the plantation offices. Many students have missed numerous interviews and jobs due to these issues.

There are three children in a family in this school. Both parents are tea plantation workers. All three of them are studying well. Two of these girls have obtained distinction passes in all nine subjects. Their dream is to become the best doctor. The elder girl is studying Biology, and the second girl also wants to study biology but due to the financial struggle and sending for private classes was a problem, she was asked to choose another stream the business stream. Every day she worries that she will not be able to become a doctor. When we examine the lives of the children in the plantation schools, many are continuing their studies with burying their ambitions.

Interview with a plantation student studying Biology who got distinction in all nine subjects in the Ordinary Level Examination
How did you manage to excel in all nine subjects?
I was able to achieve success in all nine subjects by studying day and night under the guidance of teachers. My childhood dream was to become a doctor. But to make my dream a success I have to work very hard.
What challenges do you face studying biology?
Having studied in a plantation school, it was a bit difficult for me to go to the urban area and get used to the environment there. As our school does not have the facilities to study biology in the Advanced level, I had to go to the town to a new school.

Tuition classes are important in the biology section. These extra classes are important to fully comprehend the subject. But the cost of the private class is huge for my parents. Therefore, the biggest challenge for me is to pay for the extra classes. Since it was a new school, it was difficult to make friends with the other students. It takes a great deal of courage to move from the plantation area to the urban area because many social barriers have to be broken. There are two groups in the school, the old students and the new entrants. From the clothes we wear to the footwear, we have to be mindful. Even a small mistake will be amplified into a big one.

As far as the teachers are concerned, their focus on the biology stream is for the students who come for their private classes. One may call it private practice in the education sector. They openly discriminate against others who do not attend such classes and, often yell at the students from the plantations for minor mistakes saying, that "You are not suitable for the Bio stream, you should go and join the arts stream."

Although I always felt lonely in the school at the beginning, the school environment is a happy place for me because of the few friends I have managed to make now. Discrimination in school was a big challenge for me in the early days.

What would you like to say to current students?

Only education can change everything. Study hard and turn every obstacle into a steppingstone to succeed in life. The achievement of a plantation student comprises huge struggles. Although we all are plantation Tamils, there are many divisions

among us. To achieve in life to taste victory, we need perseverance and continuous effort. Not only do we progress, but once we progress, we should also encourage the children of our society and bring them to a better standard.

Conclusion and way forward
In conclusion, this brief study points that there exists a disparity between the educational environment in the urban Hatton schools and the plantation schools surrounding Hatton. As far as the plantation community is concerned, education is the key for upward social transformation. As transpired in this article, socio-religious, economic and political interventions are important.

- **Political role**

As far as plantation politics is concerned, politicians do not keep their promises. They are accused of working for their self-interest rather than the interest of their voters. Politicians' non-intervention to address the said educational injustices faced by the plantation community, draws the suspicion of the sincerity of the politicians, accuses them of wanting to sustain an uneducated society in order keep domination over the people. It should be noted that the educational needs of the students are not being fully met due to the appointment of some unqualified teachers. Therefore, not only to increase the appointment of graduate teachers but also against the interference of politicians in the transfers of teachers etc.,

Nevertheless, the political role is very vital. It is the legislature that needs to make the appropriate policies. All plantation schools must receive equal facilities. The state must formulate

methods to reduce the number of students who drop out of school due to poverty by introducing welfare programs that cover the plantation community.

- ### Social and religious interventions

Today, many non-governmental organizations are set up to help the people of the plantations. But to what extent the aid reaches the people is questionable. However, when awareness about education is created among the people through such social service organizations, the importance of education will become an opportunity. Students drop out of school due to poverty; programs must be implemented to support such students. The church of Ceylon Estate Community Development Mission (ECDM) is a noteworthy intervention. However, the church must aim to create network of such organizations working in the plantations. Such networks along with inter religious interventions are important in creating awareness about the importance of education and the parental responsibility in the plantation community. Religious actors can play a strong role in advocacy against the discrimination of plantation children in the urban schools and to persuade the government for better policies regarding education in the plantation schools.

- ### Introducing tertiary education

Both public and private universities and vocational institutions are known as tertiary education. This education eliminates poverty and promotes the development and prosperity of a nation. In Sri Lanka, tertiary educational institutions in good standing are found in many areas, but as far as the plantations are concerned there are only few in good standing. There is also

a lack of widespread knowledge about this. Therefore, by introducing standard tertiary institutions in the plantations, particularly, tertiary education aimed at industries common to the terrain, such as livestock farming, cultivation and diary etc. will create a productive community. An awareness about these among the students must be created. It will also lead to a better future and career opportunities for students who are unable to study. It can also reduce the number of young men and women who go to different parts of Sri Lanka for causal work. Therefore, it is imperative that only a non-discriminative education system with the implementation of a relevant tertiary education system can transform the plantation community into a dignified society in the future.

(lifniyavivekananthan@gmail.com)

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Salvation and Creation

Bro. Hasitha Jayawardena

Introduction

Correct understanding leads to correct thinking and correct actions. A correct understanding of creation and salvation will help us comprehend its deeper truth. Initially it is important to understand the two main parts within this heading. Therefore, we will first try to comprehend "creation" and then "salvation".

I wish to state that throughout this research paper, whenever the following terms are used; nature, environment and creation, they are understood as synonymous.

It is understood by all that in the present times the world at large is in a liberation struggle to protect the environment. However, if we understand the reality of the environment, it is evident that we cannot survive without it. Humanity attempts to go beyond creation by their own innovations and seeks a world absent from nature. Yet someday it will dawn on us that there is no survival without creation. Humanity that is in struggle to live their lives must instead engage in a struggle to keep alive the environment. Regardless of race or religion, humanity will be protected if the environment is protected.

Prior to the birth of religion humanity regarded the environment as 'Divine'. This worldview that was prevalent in ancient man

seemed to disappear with the intellectual renaissance. However, during the prehistoric period man witnessed God through nature. This closeness to nature that was present in ancient man has gradually moved away today. Ancient man was aware that in nature was protected their lives would be protected. As they lived as hunters, they were conscious not to hunt down a mother animal bearing a life. They were conscious not to cut down essential trees.

Prior to the birth of modern-day science and technology, ancient man was wise to know that oxygen was essential for human breathing and carbon dioxide was essential for the life growth of trees. The biblical reading of reality reminds us that the environment and humanity was born before religion. Man lived because of the gifts of nature. Nature offered justice to humanity in its giving of gifts. Therefore, humanity and nature are interconnected, interwoven to each other, it is this truth we must embrace. Simply put, without nature there will be no man.

1. What is Creation or Nature?

Nature can be defined as Environment and in a Biblical sense as Creation. Therefore, we will find the creation narrative of the world in the first book of the Bible in Genesis, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth". This verse brings to life the truth about God's creation. We will understand that nature is creation of the Creator God. We can witness the creativity of God through God's creation. What was the basis for this creation to take place? Let's focus on this for a moment.

Psalm 33: 6 says the following, "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth" and verse 09 says, "For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."

As we focus our attention to the creation narrative in the book of Genesis, it is evident that creation came to being with the words, "Then God said". Therefore, we observe that creation came to being in accordance with the Words spoken by God.

In the Hebrew language the term "Bara" is used in reference to an act of God. Thus, the creative work of God can be witnessed through God's creation. Biblically we could interpret that it is the Divine Command from God that gave life to the creation.

The theologian Paul Tillich mentions that it is in the losing of something that something new is created. Therefore, it becomes evident that "Creation ex Nihilo"; out of nothing God brings life to creation. Genesis 1:1b gives evidence to this as the scripture passage mentions that "the earth was formless and empty".

As expressed by the authors of the Bible, in the Old Testament the Word of God and Wisdom become God's agents of creation and in the New Testament it is Jesus Christ who is God's agent of creation. Some examples would be.
Colossians 1: 16

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.

Hebrews 1: 2b

Whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

John 1: 3

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

As we focus our attention to the Gospel of John, chapter 01, verses 02 and 03,

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."

This brings to our attention the truth that during the Creation of the world someone was with God and this person was also God Himself.

John 1: 14 says the following, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth". It becomes evident to us according to the words of John that this Word is Jesus Christ.

The above-mentioned words become proved further as we focus our attention to the Epistle by Paul and Timothy to the Colossians 1: 15 – 17. According to verse 15 Jesus Christ is identified as the first born of creation, the visible image of the invisible God. Further, verse 16 affirms the following, "all things were created by him and for him." It is my understanding that

Jesus Christ is creation as all of creation was created for him and by him. The supreme creation in the created order is man and this perfect image of man in all its beauty and glory is visible in the person of Jesus Christ.

Genesis 1: 27 states the following, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Considering this verse, I wish to share the following interpretation about the image of God,

- Man has been created with a soul and a mind capable of reason.
- Man has been created as a complete being.
- Man has been created with dignity and authority.

(I provide the following interpretations based on Genesis 1: 27)
The image of God in humanity was defiled as man fell into the grip of sin. Man, who fell into sin began to think only about himself and began accusing others. Man began to judge others. Thus, there was a need for man who had defiled the image of God in him because of sin to experience salvation.

2. What is Salvation?

In the Bible, the book of Johan 2: 9 states the following, "salvation comes from the Lord". Therefore, it is only God who can liberate man and restore the image of God in humanity. I would like to define sin as humanity opposing God's creation. Therefore, the destruction of nature or creation is a sin. Therefore, if someone fails to do good that is known to the

individual it is considered a sin. It is a sin against the creation created by God. In other words, sin is the act of opposing creation or nature. This makes the destruction of the environment a grave sin committed by humanity.

Thus, the divine image within man diminished as the sinful nature of man overpowered his being and God had to offer Jesus Christ as a sacrifice to liberate humanity from this state of sin.

It is mentioned in Colossians 1: 20, as follows, "and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."

Therefore, we comprehend that God's plan was the liberation of creation and humanity and not man to be liberated through creation; thus, the salvation of humanity and the entire universe.

3. The relationship between salvation and creation

The theologian Lynn White emphasizes that humanity is merely a part of creation and humanity has a special relationship with God as God relates to the creation.
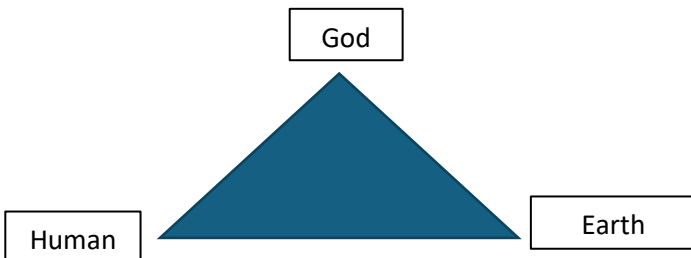
Creation is not a story between God and creation but a narrative emphasizing the relationship between God, the earth and humanity. Therefore, sin can be understood as man distancing himself from God and distancing himself from creation.

One of the primary aims of God's mission is to restore creation to that state expected by God. It is God's hope to re-connect all of creation to each other. Therefore, it must be our mission as well to restore the lost relationship between humanity and creation. In another sense it is the restoration of the relationship between humanity and Jesus Christ. It is our mission to ensure not merely the salvation of a sinful person but also the transformation of our world.

The theologian Karl Moller mentions that we cannot talk about mission without considering the state of our world. Therefore, mission can be understood as a universal task. The aim of mission must not be limited to the saving of a sinful being but also the transformation of the world.

Thus, we witness a deep relationship between creation and salvation. God sent his only begotten Son to this world to restore creation to His expected state. The theologian David Bosch emphasizes that mission is our efforts to preserve life and growth of all of creation as this was God's objective of mission.
The Bible speaks of the New Adam who is the Anointed One of God who will come to deliver humanity from sin. Thus, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ can be understood as one of the most

goodness filled events of creation history. This is because the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is for the goodness of creation. It was God's hope that through this incarnation Justice will be meted out to creation. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is understood by me as God's re-connection with creation or salvation.

4. There is no salvation without creation or the environment

We may be of the thinking that our mission is to bring to God non-believers by sharing the Gospel, teaching and baptizing them. This concept is something we received from the colonial era and is a concept of colonialism. The mission of God is a divine mission that concerns not only humanity but the liberation of all of creation.

As we reflect upon the creation narrative from the book of Genesis in the Bible (Genesis 1: 1-31) it becomes evident that God first created the heavens and the earth. Afterwards God acted to fill the empty and void earth with beauty, a transformation of the earth. Finally, God observed the created order and said it was good.

Therefore, it is clear to us that prior to creating humanity God created the environment. As mentioned in Genesis 2: 7, man was created from the dust of the earth and therefore man becomes a closely knit part of the earth as a being created by the dust of the earth. The scriptures also affirm that upon death man will return to the soil and therefore it is clear that humanity is

very much an interlocked and deeply connected part of the environment. It is by the law of nature that man becomes one with the soil upon death, thus affirming this fact.

Genesis 2: 15 states that man was created, and God instructed him to tend and protect the Garden of Eden. Thus, taking care of creation is the responsibility of humanity.

Genesis 3 makes record of how man created by God fell into the grip of sin. Genesis 3: 21 also mentions how man who fell into sin began to cover this sin by preparing clothes to conceal this sinful nature. Thus, we witness humanity seeking the help of the environment even to cover their sins; to cover their nakedness they sewed fig leaves together.

In New Testament times it became the practice of the Jews to get into the water and be cleansed of their sinful ways through the ritual of baptism. According to Matthew 3: 6 John the Baptist baptized many from the regions of Jerusalem, Judea and the areas surrounding the river, Jordan. Matthew 3:13 – 17 makes record of Jesus too being baptized by John the Baptist. Thus, it becomes clear to us that even at this point it is Water from the environment that comes to the aid of humanity. As a sign of repentance, it was a baptism by water that became the chosen practice.

Jesus Christ too utilized illustrations from creation in his sermons to preach about the kingdom of God. The parable of the

mustard seed, the parable of the Sower are a few examples of how creation served in revealing truths concerning the kingdom of God. Thus, it is clear to us that the environment aids humanity in experiencing salvation.

Conclusion

It is now clear to us that Creation and Salvation have a deep-rooted connection. It also clear to us that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the salvation of not merely humanity alone. It is the will of God that together with humanity, creation too must experience salvation.

According to Colossians 1: 20, "and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." It is God's wish to reconcile humanity and all of creation to Himself. Thus, ensuring the welfare and salvation of the entire universe. The book of Colossians makes record that God reconciled to himself in Jesus Christ all things in heaven and on earth.

We must not forget that as the supreme creation of God humanity has the greatest responsibility towards creation which has been reconciled to God through Jesus Christ.

Paul mentions in Romans 8: 19 that the creation waits in eager expectation for God's revelation. He further emphasizes that the children of God have a responsibility to work towards the

freedom of creation that is 'subjected to frustration not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it.'

According to Romans 8: 22, "the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth". It is my understanding that presently creation is groaning in pain as it has been dragged towards destruction. Therefore, as those who were born out of creation and as people of creation, we have a responsibility to safeguard creation from this pathway towards destruction.

Currently the biggest cause for the destruction of the environment is humanity. We have destroyed nature's natural cycle by using the so-called human intellect to bring about artificially generated rainfall as opposed to natural showers of rain. As a result of this humanity has to face the consequences of such an action. Floods and landslides are the result of man attempting to generate artificial rainfall.

Genetically manipulated plant life has proved to have cancerous effects on humanity. The environment continues to be destroyed by pollution caused by polythene and plastic. The actions of human beings have resulted in also the destruction of water systems.

A good example is the construction of highways without a proper environmental analysis which has impacted animal life in the region resulting in animals having to find shelter and food in

lands occupied by human beings. Improper development plans have had such consequences.

There are many other examples that can be sited to affirm the fact that humanity is the biggest cause for the destruction of creation. Man, who was created to protect and safeguard creation has become the biggest cause for its destruction.

These actions of destruction have hindered the relationship with God and with creation. Therefore, we must affirm this truth that safeguarding the environment is safeguarding humanity. We must all come together and act to ensure the salvation of creation. Comprehending that there is no salvation if there is no environment we must strive to protect creation as vessels of goodness. The environment which we regard as God's creation must be the religion of all people. (hj2hash@gmail.com)

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Further Reference

STATE OF THE EVIDENCE IN RELIGIONS AND DEVELOPMENT (JLIFLC)
Chapter 3
(Religion and the Environment)

Sinhala   **Tamil**

Religious Engagement in Politics

Bro. L. Balasubramaniyam

Introduction

The relationship between religion and political engagement has been a subject of intense scrutiny and debate for centuries. Religion, as a deeply personal and societal force, has shaped cultures, laws, and governance structures around the world. Political engagement, on the other hand, is crucial for the stability and dynamism of societies. It ensures that citizens participate in the decision-making processes that govern their lives, thereby contributing to the legitimacy and effectiveness of governance. The intersection of these two powerful forces-religion and politics-raises important questions about how religious beliefs influence political behavior and how political structures, in turn, may shape religious practices.

Objective of this study - This research explores the relationship between religion and political engagement. It attempts to understand that there is a strong relationship between religion and politics. This suggests that in societies where there is a clear religious understanding, there is a higher likelihood of political engagement among the populace. However, the nature of this engagement can vary significantly depending on the religious teachings and the sociopolitical context in which they are practiced.

The Importance of Political Engagement

Political engagement is fundamental to the functioning of democratic societies. It involves activities such as voting, protesting, lobbying, and participating in civic organizations. These activities are vital for holding governments accountable and ensuring that the voices of citizens are heard in the policymaking process. Political engagement also promotes social cohesion by encouraging dialogue and cooperation among different groups within society. In this context, the participation of youth is particularly important. Young people represent the future of any society, and their involvement in politics is essential for ensuring that the political system remains responsive to changing social needs and aspirations. However, political engagement is not uniform across different societies or even within the same society. Various factors, including socioeconomic status, education, and religious beliefs, influence the extent to which individuals engage in political activities.

Christianity and Political Engagement

Christianity, in particular, has a long history of influencing political engagement. The teachings of Jesus and the writings of the New Testament provide a moral framework that has guided Christian involvement in politics for centuries. For example, the concept of the "Kingdom of God," which emphasizes justice, mercy, and compassion, has been a central theme in Christian political thought.

- **A Biblical Perspective**

The assertion that "good governance is God's business" is a common theological viewpoint, particularly rooted in the

concept of the Divine Right of Kings. This idea posits that the authority of rulers derives from God, and therefore, their actions are ultimately subject to divine judgment.

- **Biblical Foundations**

Divine Sovereignty: The Bible emphasizes God's absolute authority over all creation, including human rulers. This is evident in passages like Psalm 115:3, which states, "Our God is in the heavens; he does whatever he pleases."

God as the Source of Authority: The Bible also suggests that human authority is derived from God. For example, Romans 13:1 states "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."

Accountability to God: Rulers are ultimately accountable to God for their actions. This is illustrated in passages like Proverbs 21:1, which warns, "The king's heart is in the Lord's hand; like watercourses, he turns it wherever he will."

- **The Role of Prophets and Jesus**

Prophets in the Bible often served as divine messengers, challenging rulers who deviated from God's righteous standards. They called for justice, righteousness, and compassion in governance. Jesus, as the ultimate prophet, also addressed political issues, challenging the hypocrisy of religious leaders and the injustice of the Roman Empire. While the Bible does not explicitly outline a specific political system, it does provide principles for good governance. It's important to note that the concept of the Divine Right of Kings has been used to justify authoritarian rule and has been criticized for its potential to absolve rulers from accountability to their people.

- **The Role of the Church in Political Engagement**

Jonathan Leeman, in his book Political Church, argues that Christianity is inherently political. He explains that the early church was known as an ekklesia, a Greek term that means "public assembly" and was used in the New Testament to describe the church as a political body. Leeman further argues that the church, as a vessel of God's holy sovereignty, exists to display the righteousness, justice, and love of the triune God. This perspective challenges the idea that religion and politics should be compartmentalized. Instead, it suggests that Christians have a responsibility to engage in politics as part of their faith.

The church has historically been a key player in political engagement, especially during periods of social and political upheaval. A notable example is the Reformation, when religious figures such as Martin Luther and John Calvin boldly challenged both political and religious authorities, sparking transformative changes in church and state structures. The Reformation not only reshaped religious institutions but also profoundly altered Europe's political landscape. It contributed to the decline of the Catholic Church's political dominance, facilitated the rise of nation-states, and paved the way for greater secularism in governance, laying the groundwork for modern political systems. In more recent history, the church has been at the forefront of movements for social justice and political reform. For example, during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the black church served as a crucial organizing space for activists.

The role of the church in political engagement is not limited to activism, however. The church also plays a role in shaping the political attitudes and behaviors of its members through its teachings and practices. For example, the Catholic Church's teachings on social justice have influenced the political behavior of Catholics around the world.

The Position of Religion in Political Engagement

- **Marxist Perspectives on Religion and Political Engagement**

Karl Marx famously characterized religion as the "opium of the people," arguing that it functions as a tool for the ruling class to pacify the working masses by offering comfort and distraction from their oppressive material conditions. Marx believed that religion provides a false sense of hope by promising rewards in the afterlife, which in turn discourages the oppressed from challenging injustices and seeking social equality in the present.

From a Marxist standpoint, religion is seen as a force that can stifle political engagement by encouraging passive acceptance of the status quo. For example, religious teachings that emphasize submission to authority or the inevitability of suffering can lead to a disengaged populace that is less likely to challenge unjust political systems. However, this view is not universally accepted, and there is evidence to suggest that religion can also be a powerful motivator for political activism, particularly when it is used to challenge oppression and promote social justice.

- **Religion as a Motivator for Political Engagement**

Contrary to the Marxist view, many historical and contemporary examples demonstrate that religion can inspire political activism. For instance, the Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s was deeply rooted in Christian teachings. Leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. used religious rhetoric and imagery to mobilize African Americans and their allies in the struggle for civil rights. King's philosophy of nonviolent resistance was heavily influenced by Christian principles, particularly the teachings of Jesus on love, forgiveness, and justice.

Similarly, in South Africa, the fight against apartheid was strongly influenced by Christian leaders such as Desmond Tutu. Tutu's advocacy for nonviolent resistance and reconciliation was grounded in his Christian faith, and he used his position within the Anglican Church to challenge the legitimacy of the apartheid regime. His efforts, along with those of other religious leaders, were instrumental in bringing about the end of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic government in South Africa.

In both of these examples, religion was not a force for passive acceptance but rather a catalyst for political change. Religious beliefs and institutions provided a framework for understanding injustice and a source of inspiration for those seeking to create a more just society.

- **Government policies and Religious interventions**

Government policies can also significantly impact the intervention of religion in political engagement. For example, government policies on moral issues such as abortion and

same-sex marriage can spur political involvement by religious groups. In the United States, the Religious Right emerged as a powerful political force in the late 20th century, mobilizing conservative Christians to support policies that aligned with their moral beliefs. This movement has had a lasting impact on American politics, particularly in shaping the platforms of the Republican Party.

The Complexity of Religion and Political Participation
The literature on religion and political participation suggests that religion can both encourage and suppress civic and political engagement, depending on various factors. These include the specific beliefs and practices of a religious group, the sociopolitical context in which they operate, and the actions of the government. While some elements of religion may promote detachment from the civic realm, others can serve as powerful motivators for political action.

For example, private devotionalism, which emphasizes individual spirituality and a personal relationship with the divine, may lead to a focus on inward reflection rather than outward political engagement. Conversely, collective aspects of religious belief and practice, such as communal worship, social justice teachings, and religiously based social networks, often track with higher levels of political participation.

- **Complexity of Interaction**

The interaction between religion, politics, and society is complex and multifaceted. Religion can be a powerful force for social cohesion, providing individuals with a sense of belonging and purpose. It can also be a source of division, as religious

differences have often led to conflict and violence. Political systems, in turn, can either accommodate or suppress religious expression, shaping the ways in which religion interacts with society.

In some cases, religion has been used to justify political power and control. For example, the divine right of kings was a doctrine that held that monarchs were appointed by God and therefore had absolute authority over their subjects. This doctrine was used to legitimize the authority of monarchs and to suppress dissent.

In other cases, religion has been a force for social and political change. For example, the abolitionist movement in the United States was deeply rooted in Christian beliefs about the inherent dignity and worth of every human being. Abolitionists used religious arguments to challenge the institution of slavery and to advocate for the rights of African Americans.

The relationship between religion and politics is not static; it evolves over time in response to changing social, economic, and political conditions. For example, the rise of secularism in the modern era has led to a decline in the influence of religion on politics in many parts of the world. However, in other regions, particularly in the Global South, religion continues to play a central role in political life.

- **Religious Political Parties**

Religious political parties have emerged as responses to diverse social, political, and economic conditions, often with the goal of reshaping public policy and governance to reflect their religious ideologies. For instance, Islamic political parties in the Middle

East and North Africa have aimed to establish governments grounded in Islamic law (Sharia), motivated by a desire to create societies that embody Islamic values. These parties have often gained momentum in reaction to the perceived shortcomings of secular governments in addressing key social and economic challenges, such as corruption, inequality, and poverty. As a result, they seek to offer an alternative vision of governance, one that integrates spiritual and moral principles into the political landscape. However, their overall impact had been oppressive.

- **Religious rights groups**

Religious political movements can also emerge in response to social injustice and inequality. For example, the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America emerged in the 1960s as a response to the widespread poverty and oppression faced by the region's marginalized communities. Liberation theologians argued that the church should take a more active role in promoting social justice and challenging the structures of power that perpetuate inequality.

Similarly, the rise of the Religious Right in the USA has been driven by a desire to influence public policy in areas such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and education. The Religious Right has mobilized conservative Christians to support candidates and policies that align with their moral beliefs. This movement has had a significant impact on American politics, particularly in shaping the platforms of the Republican Party.

- **Religious Engagement in Sri Lankan Politics**

Sri Lanka, a predominantly Buddhist nation, has a history of intricate interplay between religion and politics. This relationship has often been characterized by both harmony and tension,

shaping the country's political landscape and social dynamics. Buddhism as a State Religion, Buddhism has a significant influence on Sri Lankan politics.

Ethno-Religious Tensions, The Island's ethnic and religious diversity, with significant Muslim and Tamil populations, has sometimes led to tensions. These tensions have often been exploited for political gain, with some politicians using religious rhetoric to mobilize support. Role of Religious Leaders - Religious leaders, particularly Buddhist monks, have played a prominent role in Sri Lankan politics. Religious Symbolism and Nationalism - Religious symbols and narratives have been used to promote nationalism and foster a sense of unity among the Sinhalese majority.

Negative Examples of Political Engagement and Religion in Sri Lanka

- **Colonial Era**

The British colonial administration often exploited religious differences between Sinhalese Buddhists and Tamil Hindus to maintain control. They favored the Sinhalese community, leading to resentment among the Tamils. The British imposed restrictions on certain religious practices, particularly those that challenged their authority or posed a threat to their colonial interests.

- **Religious extremism**

Some Buddhist nationalists have used religion to promote Sinhala nationalism and xenophobia, particularly against the Tamil minority. This has contributed to the ongoing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. There have been instances of religious

extremism, including violence and discrimination against members of other faiths. These actions have undermined religious tolerance and social harmony. Buddhist monks have sometimes become involved in politics, using their influence to promote their own agendas or those of political parties. This can lead to the politicization of religion and the erosion of religious neutrality.

Challenges and Criticisms

The involvement of religion in politics is not without its challenges and criticisms. One of the main criticisms is that religious involvement in politics can lead to the imposition of religious beliefs on individuals who do not share those beliefs. Another criticism is that religious involvement in politics can undermine the separation of church and state, a principle that is considered fundamental to the functioning of democratic societies. When religious institutions become too closely aligned with political power, there is a risk that they will become politicized and lose their moral authority. This can lead to a situation where religious leaders are seen as political actors rather than spiritual guides, undermining the trust and respect that they command within their communities.

Additionally, the involvement of religion in politics can lead to the exclusion of certain groups from the political process. For example, in countries where religious beliefs are closely tied to national identity, individuals who do not adhere to the dominant religion may be marginalized or excluded from political participation. This can lead to a situation where certain voices

and perspectives are not represented in the political process, undermining the inclusivity and fairness of the political system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear from the above discussion that religion and politics have a strong relationship. The theological premise advocates that good governance is a business of God and is the business of the disciples of Christ. However, it's also clear that the relationship between religion and political engagement is complex and multifaceted. While religion can serve as a powerful motivator for political action, it can also discourage political participation in certain contexts. The interaction between religion and politics is shaped by a variety of factors, including the specific beliefs and practices of a religious group, the sociopolitical context in which they operate, and the actions of the government.

In democratic societies, political engagement is crucial for ensuring that the voices of all citizens are heard, and that the government remains accountable to the people. Religion can play a positive role in this process by providing individuals with a moral framework for understanding justice and promoting social cohesion. However, it is important to ensure that religious involvement in politics does not lead to the imposition of religious beliefs on others or the exclusion of certain groups from the political process, as was seen in the colonial era It is imperative that religious engagement in politics fosters a constructive and life-affirming environment. However, the relationship between religion and politics in Sri Lanka is a

complex one, shaped by historical, cultural, and social factors. Therefore, religious beliefs should be used

to promote unity, compassion, and the well-being of all individuals. Any form of religious extremism must not be tolerated. In summary, the challenge is to find a balance between respecting religious beliefs and ensuring that political systems remain inclusive and fair. This requires ongoing dialogue and cooperation between religious and political leaders, as well as a commitment to upholding the principles of democracy and human rights. The church is called to establish the values of the Kingdom of God.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussion, I wish to place the following recommendations for a positive religious engagement in politics

1. Christian Education in the churches must include 'Good governance' as a part of its curriculum. This will facilitate the community to understand that religious engagement in politics is a priority in Christian Discipleship.
2. Inter-faith forums must be formed at parish level. This will foster an Interfaith Dialogue: Encourage regular and open dialogue between representatives of different faiths. This can help foster understanding, respect, and cooperation. This will also help to foster shared Values and Identify and promote shared values that transcend religious differences, such as compassion, justice, and human dignity. This will also help to fight against religious extremism.
3. Establishment of regional Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Desks (JRAP). This can be implemented at area-deanery levels.

Such regional forums in connection with the local parish level inter-faith groups can be a prophetic voice towards good governance.

4. Advocacy to include comparative religious education in the secondary school curriculum. Such knowledge will provide an opportunity for students to understand other religions and stand against religious extremism

5. Most importantly the church must continue to sustain her independence. Party politics must be avoided at all costs. Therefore, her voice to advocate for the truth is not hindered by any way.

(lowrencebala@gmail.com)

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Principles of Good Governance in Ancient Buddhist Civilizations of Asia: Foundations for Modern Constitutionalism in Sri Lanka

Dilshan Fernando

Introduction

Ancient Buddhist civilization was carved on an aged old Hindu system of governance anteceding the birth of Lord Buddha. While the classical Greek period laid the foundation for the modern study of politics – evolving primarily within the European context, it overlooked the rich socio-political thinking produced by the Buddhist and Hindu traditions within the historical Asia. (Uyangoda, 2018).

Sri Lanka was not immune to the challenges of colonialism, a fate shared by many states across Asia. One such major complication stemming from colonial rule has been the rise of reactionary nationalist sentiments, which have fueled ethnic and religious conflicts. Colonial powers, since their arrival, disrupted the delicate balance among the indigenous communities and their social-political structures. The colonization of Ceylon by the Portuguese, Dutch and eventually the British, led to centuries of cultural, socio-political, and economic setbacks. (Rahula,2013)

Among these colonizers, the British held power for the longest period, exploiting the island's resources and dismantling its

existing socio-political structures to serve their governance needs. British intentions are evident in official correspondences, which reveal efforts to create a rift between local leadership and the Buddhist monks, thus fostering a power imbalance that benefited the British (Rahula, 2013)

The constitutional reforms introduced by the British prior to Sri Lanka gaining independence, along with the transfer of power to the privileged local leadership created under colonial rule, reveal an open secret: the British maintained their influence and had no real intention of relinquishing control. Moreover, it is evident that what the British introduced was largely perceived as 'civilized' by the local political elite, including the form of government. As a result, much of the colonial socio-political structures were retained, with little to no consideration given to the concept of decolonization. According to Mayor Nye (2019), a process of internal colonization of the ruling classes of the colonized develops even after the political decolonization of the direct influence of the colonizers which is further observed by Hamza Alavi (1972), a British political scientist of Pakistani origin that post-colonial states further continue social and political structures of colonialism making only minor changes.

Research Questions & Objectives

The explanation above offers valuable insight into where we should seek inspiration when laying the foundations of modern constitutionalism in Sri Lanka, focusing on reconciliation, inclusivity, democracy, and good governance. Being mindful of

the British efforts to separate the state from Buddhism—based on the emerging liberal understanding of secularism in the West—helps us comprehend the fears embedded in the sentiments of the Sinhalese Buddhist majority. The active role of monks and the historical relationship between Buddhism and the state can be traced back to ancient Buddhist civilizations, where it was believed that the path to liberation was found by living in a harmonious community. Therefore, mechanisms of governance, including constitutionalism, can only be truly effective by understanding the profound impact of Buddhist heritage on Sri Lankan society.

As the world moves forward in creating a better future through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international human rights treaties, and the Millennium Declaration on the Right to Development, as outlined in the UN Resolution "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"—it is vital that we reflect on the immediate past, which has significantly shaped present and future initiatives aimed at realizing the full potential of the SDGs.

This writing seeks to highlight SDG Goal 16, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provides access to justice for all, and builds effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels by exploring how ancient Buddhist principles of governance can be enshrined in a modern constitutional framework reflecting values such as

justice, fairness, and welfare of the people by analyzing Buddhist ethical teachings, administrative systems which will be comparatively discussed in reference to the contemporary legal and political structures of Sri Lanka. Special attention is given to subclauses 16.3, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10, and 16.b, which call for:

- Promoting the rule of law and ensuring equal access to justice for all.

- Substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms.

- Developing effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels.

- Ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.

- Ensuring public access to information and protecting fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation and international agreements; and

- Promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development.

Findings of the Study

- **Lord Buddha and Good Governance**

In light of Lord Buddha's teachings, it is clear that he advocated for some form of governance and rejected anarchism, even though he viewed such systems as worldly constructs that often lead to greed and delusion. Several of his central teachings on politics, governance, and the state are found in the Pali Canon, specifically in sutras such as the Agganna Sutta of the Digha Nikaya, Ambattha Sutta, Cakkavatti Sutta, Maha Sudassana

Sutta, Maha-Parinibbana Sutta, Lakkhana Sutta, and Bala-pandita Sutta.

According to Uyangoda (2018), although Lord Buddha primarily referred to monarchical systems of governance, his personal preference leaned toward a primitive form of republicanism, as practiced by the Licchavis in ancient India. This perspective is clearly reflected in the Maha-Parinibbana Sutta, where Buddha recognizes consensus-based decision-making after discussions as a safeguard against the decline of governance- an idea that mirrors basic democratic principles in the moder world. He emphasizes that communities that meet, depart, and conduct their affairs in harmony will prosper rather than decline.

In addition to these instructions, two key principles from the *Maha-Parinibbana Sutta* stand out as preventing the decline of a community. First, Buddha says, "As long as the Vajjis don't make new decrees or abolish existing ones but adhere to the ancient Vajjian traditions, they can expect growth, not decline." Second, "As long as the Vajjis honor, respect, and esteem their elders, and regard them as worth listening to, they can expect growth, not decline."

It is important not to hastily conclude that the first principle makes Buddha a traditionalist or resistant to change. Instead, he may have been suggesting adherence to core republican values without a rush to embrace novelty. The second principle, points to the importance of wisdom and experience, with elders

symbolizing the learned and experts in today's society. As Franklin D. Roosevelt once stated, "Education is the real safeguard of democracy," and as Bertolt Brecht asserted, "The worst illiterate is the political illiterate."

In light of the Buddha's teachings, it is equally important to critically examine whether representative democracy—driven by political parties motivated by acquiring governmental power—can truly be considered the ideal form of government in the Asian context of Buddhist-Hindu civilizations. In these civilizations, republican principles were traditionally practiced by common people in governance. This tradition of republican governance was perpetuated among the tribal Sanghas, which in turn influenced the structure of the Buddhist Sangha. As S. Dutt (1962) notes, "they deliberated and acted together, were communistic in their property-relationships, republican in their conduct of affairs, and had the tribal councils as their organ of government" (p. 86). Furthermore, studies of these tribal republics reveal that "each member of the assembly was called a raja (ruler), but none had the individual power to mould the decisions of the assembly" (Sharma, 1968, p. 241).

- **The paradox of the state in liberal democracy**

The people, as well as their rulers, understood the purpose of the state in the ancient world. Just as Plato argued that the ideal state exists to ensure the well-being of its citizens, and as Aristotle asserted that the state exists for the purpose of fulfilling a good life, these views contrasted sharply with the modern,

more skeptical understanding of politics and power as mechanisms for domination and control. This modern skepticism often excludes ordinary people from meaningful participation in governance. However, the 20th-century republican thinker Hannah Arendt emphasized a different perspective, claiming that "Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act, but to act in concert," highlighting the importance of collective action and public participation in political life.

While the idea may sound idealistic, in relation to the paradox of the state in liberal democracy, ancient practices and the views expressed by both Eastern and Western philosophers must be re-evaluated, especially when considering Plato's description of the Guardians in 'The Republic'. These insights should be reconsidered to better suit the Asian social and political context, which may transcend the competitive, power-driven leadership seen in liberal democracies today—a system that often results in passive citizenship.

The decline of the republic, as described in the Maha-Parinibbana Sutta, was closely linked to the rise of monarchy and the growing spirit of individualism. This shift towards a passive form of individualism undermined social collectivity, shaping popular thought in a way that ultimately fueled the growth of consumerism. In this context, the collective well-being of society was overshadowed by self-interest, allowing consumerist ideals to thrive as the expense of communal values.

In liberal democracies, political leadership is frequently motivated by the pursuit of power, leading to a more disengaged populace. By contrast, ancient governance systems, both in Eastern traditions such as the Buddhist 'Sangha' and in Western thought like Plato's 'Republic', emphasized leadership that was more focused on the common good and community well-being rather than personal ambition. Plato's 'Guardians', for instance, were conceived as philosopher-kings, leaders who ruled not for personal gain but out of a sense of duty to serve the people. This model aligns more closely with the republican principles historically practiced in Asia, where governance was often based on communal decision-making and the well-being of the whole.

In the Maha-Parinibbana Sutta, the Buddha rejects the idea of an authoritarian ruler, and whatever structure the Buddhist Sangha might resemble, it certainly does not reflect a monarchy. The buddha did not elevate himself as a personal ruler, nor did he encourage any member of the community to view themselves in such a way. By doing so, the buddha eliminated the possibility of leader glorification, as seen in autocratic, or even in representative democracies, where leaders are often idealized. His approach fundamentally opposed any form of centralized, authoritarian leadership (Ling, 2020)

In the Agganna Sutta, the Buddha engages in a conversation with two young men, Vasettha and Bharadvaja, inquiring whether they have faced insults due to the caste expectations imposed by

society. In response, the buddha condemns the caste system, offering an alternative explanation that aligns with a social and biological view of human evolution, as opposed to the divine theory central to Hindu social and political thought. This teaching parallels the social contract theory, which explore the origins of the state. The underlying message of the Anganna Sutta is that inequality is a social construct, and therefore, it is within human power to change it. This establishes the Buddha as a prominent egalitarian, rejecting any form of socio-political structure or institution that discriminates against people based on social divisions.

The Dasarajadhamma, or the "Tenfold Royal Virtues," outlines the Dharmic principles that rulers must uphold. These ten virtues include charity, morality, altruism, honesty, gentleness, self-control, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance, and uprightness. This teaching does not advocate for a religious state but instead proposes a form of governance that is accountable to the people and resembles a welfare state. It is important to note that this advice was directed at monarchical systems. One can only imagine how effective governance could be if decentralized power were to embrace these virtues. Upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the concept of a Dharmic ruler is rooted in Buddhist principles such as the rule of law, social equity, and social welfare, all of which discourage the oppression of people.

The edicts of King Ashoka reflect a state model rooted in Buddhist teachings. Notably, this model emerged nearly three centuries after the Buddha, in the third century BCE. Although

Ashoka's governance was monarchical, it was reimagined within a novel conceptual framework worldly morals and ethics taught by Buddha. The state model he introduced emphasized compassion towards both humans and animals and was based on principles of social welfare. According to Uyangoda(2018), Ashoka rejected the traditional doctrine of conquest through warfare-commonly endorsed by monarchies following the Manusmriti and Arthashastra- and instead embraced the notion of conquest through righteousness (Dhamma-Vijaya). This shift marked a significant departure from the conventional governance models of the time.

Major Rock Edicts 7 and 12 of King Ashoka emphasized the importance of religious tolerance within the community. These edicts highlight a key principle contrary to the modern notion of separating Dharma from the state, as they assert that the fundamental teachings of all religions advocate restraint in speech. Ashoka advises that one should not elevate their own religion while condemning others without valid reason, if one chooses to praise or criticize another's faith, it should be done with moderation and respect. Additionally, Edict 16 recognizes universal laws that can be followed by all religions to lead a Dharmic life. This perspective is reinforced by Professor Romila Thapar, who explains that Ashoka's intent was not merely to propagate Buddhism but to promote principles that would be universally accepted by sister faiths and social groups (Thapar, 2019)

In the 15th Rock Edict, King Ashoka likens the relationship between ruler and their citizens to that of a father and son. However, according to Uyangoda(2018), this analogy is not suitable for modern democratic theory, as it could lead to the rise of an authoritarian leader with unchecked power. Instead, what should be drawn from Ashoka's exemplary state model is the principle that the state must fulfill its welfare obligations to all citizens without discrimination. Furthermore, the state and government have clear duties and responsibilities toward the people. In a modern context, rulers can be held legitimately accountable to the public through various mechanisms. This approach contrasts sharply with certain post-democratic tendencies, where leaders emphasize their rights over their duties. In Sri Lanka, for example, former rulers often exploit this narrative during election campaigns, framing it as a time for the people to express gratitude to their leaders, rather than emphasizing the leaders' responsibilities.

Conclusion & Recommendations

There is potential to develop a political framework that transcends the competitive, individualistic nature of liberal democracy, fostering more engaged and active citizens who meaningfully participate in governance. By grounding Sri Lanka's constitutionalism in Buddhist Dharmic principles, it could open possibilities for devolution, enhancing public engagement and accessibility in governance. King Ashoka's innovative approach to monarchy demonstrates that a creative rethinking of government structures, even within a democratic framework, is possible. This

suggests a shift away from the presidential system, promoting a governance model that is more aligned with collective well-being and ethical responsibility.

Additionally, this shift would redefine the historical role of Buddhist monks, who traditionally advised monarchs but are now often divided along political lines in modern democracy. Instead of aligning with political parties and contributing to social divisions, the Sangha could play a crucial role in guiding citizens on Dharmic principles of governance, fostering unity and social harmony, rather than partisanship. Such a redefined role would promote a form of governance grounded in compassion, justice, and the collective good of all people.
(condreddilshan@gmail.com)

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Disappearing Ethnic Identity due to decline in Education among Malayaha Tamils in Sabaragamuwa

Rev. Johnson Savarimutthu

Introduction

Approximately 200 years ago, Indian descendants were brought to Sri Lanka as indentured laborers from South India to work on plantation crops such as coffee and tea. They settled primarily in the regions of Central, Uva, and Sabaragamuwa Provinces. Today, these communities reside in 12 districts centered around large plantations, having transformed what were once dense forests into thriving agricultural areas. Through their hard work, they have cultivated various crops, including coffee, tea, and rubber, contributing significantly to Sri Lanka's economy over the past 200 years. A substantial portion of the country's income is derived from the plantation industry. However, when compared to global standards, this community earns very little and is often regarded as living below the poverty line. Despite their considerable contributions, Indian-origin Tamils continue to face treatment akin to slavery and endure various forms of oppression.

Currently, approximately 1,729,238 Indian-origin descendants reside in different parts of Sri Lanka. Of these, around 1,210,664 live in the districts of Nuwara Eliya, Kandy, Matale, Badulla,

Moneragala, Kegalle, Kalutara, Galle, Matara, Ratnapura, Kurunegala, and Colombo. The remaining 518,574 individuals live outside these 12 districts, including in both rural and urban areas. About 30% of them are employed in tea and rubber plantations, identifying as upcountry plantation workers, while others are engaged in trade and various professions. Those living outside the plantation areas often identify themselves as Sri Lankan Indian Tamils. The terms "Indian Tamils" or "Tamils of Indian origin" refer to all Tamils who migrated from India to Sri Lanka 200 years back. Despite their contributions to the country's economy for nearly two centuries, the hill country Tamil community is still not recognized as a national ethnic group, highlighting a pressing issue regarding their diminishing ethnic racial identity. Currently there is a movement calling to add the term Malayaha Tamils along with the Indian Tamils in the census forms.

Objective of the Study - Ethnic identity encompasses the unique characteristics that allow individuals to express themselves. Understanding an ethnic group involves recognizing its distinct traditions, arts, culture, language, customs, and emotions. When these aspects are not acknowledged or nurtured, the ethnic identity fades away. Therefore, it is the responsibility of both the ethnic group and the government to nurture, promote, and protect that identity sans claiming superiority over any other ethnic groups.   This study aims to investigate the challenges faced by the ethnic identity of Malayaha Tamils living in the Sabaragamuwa region, with a

particular focus on the declining standard of education among their children.

Ethnic Identity

According to the 2011 population census, there are 168,710 hill country Tamils living in the Sabaragamuwa province, as noted in "Foundation for Community Transformation (2006)", "Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2013c)"). In the Ratnapura district, specifically, 109,312 hill country Tamils reside in 58 major plantations, most of which are owned by Sinhalese (Registered with Sri Lanka Tea Board). Approximately 42% of them live among Sinhalese, reflecting a long history of coexistence in this area. They speak Sinhala, show interest in having their children attend Sinhala schools, often adopt Sinhala culture and names, and even intermarry with Sinhalese. They tend to be reluctant to speak their mother tongue, Tamil, which contributes to the gradual erosion of their ethnic identity.

G.C.E. Ordinary Level examination in 2020 Sabaragamuwa province Ratnapura District - Nivithigala Educational Zone:	
Qualifying for Advanced Level - District Average	70.49%
Sinhala Schools	74%
Tamil Schools (Muslim schools are not included)	26.30%

Declining Education among Plantation Children in Sabragamuwa Province

Education is essential for every individual, contributing to overall human development and economic advancement. While it is undeniable that plantation children are making some

educational progress. However, the situation in Sabaragamuwa is deteriorating, compared to other communities, their development appears stagnant, particularly in critical government examinations such as the Grade 5 scholarship exam, G.C.E. Ordinary Level, and G.C.E. Advanced Level

G.C.E. Ordinary Level examination in 2021 Sabaragamuwa province Ratnapura District - Ratnapura Educational Zone

Qualifying for Advanced Level - District Average	75.26%
Sinhala Schools:	73%
Tamil Schools (Muslim schools are not included)	38%

G.C.E. Ordinary Level examination in 2022 Sabaragamuwa province Ratnapura District - Dhiyovita Educational Zone:

Qualifying for Advanced Level - District Average	71.26%
Sinhala Schools:	74%
Tamil Schools (Muslim schools are not included)	37.02%

G.C.E. O/L 2021

Zone	Division	School	Sat for Exam	Passed	Failed
Rathnapura	Pelmadulla	Belmadulla No 1 Tamil Vidyalayam	62	5	57
Rathnapura	Pelmadulla	Neelagama Tamil Vidyalayam	13	5	8
Rathnapura	Rathnapura	Rathnapura Tamil Vidyalayam	72	17	55
Rathnapura	Siripatha	Kalaimagal Tamil Vidyalayam	62	15	47
Nivithigala	Kalawana	Kalawana Tamil Vidyalayam	13	3	10
Nivithigala	Nivithigala	Della Tamil Vidyalayam	51	12	39
Nivithigala	Kawatta	Opawatha Tamil Vidyalayam	39	7	32
Embilipitiya	Koda	Godakawela Tamil Vidyalayam	19	4	15
Balangoda	Balangoda	Meedikanda Tamil Vidyalayam	16	5	11

(Source: Upcountry Education Development Society Details of those who passed in G.C.E. Ordinary Level examination in 2020-22 Rathnapura district)

Causes of Marginalization
- ### Lack of Preschool Education

Although there are excellent preschools in cities and villages, there is a lack of adequate preschools for the plantation communities, and the existing ones are not satisfactory. These preschools often lack well-trained teachers, which is crucial for early childhood education. Today, the indifference towards the need for preschools among this community is quite concerning.

- **Human Resource**

The shortage of teachers in schools serving the plantation community in Sabaragamuwa Province is a significant issue. There is an insufficient number of teachers to meet the community's needs for subjects such as mathematics, science, commerce, and languages. For instance, students in the G.C.E. Ordinary Level and Advanced Level often must travel over 50 kilometers to places like Avissawella, Palankoda, and Hatton for additional tuition classes.

- **Social Issues**

The deteriorating educational situation in Sabaragamuwa is widely regarded as highly detrimental among the plantation community. For instance, the lack of sanitation in overcrowded housing and the inconveniences caused by neighboring houses create unhealthy living conditions. Due to economic hardships, many women choose to work as housemaids in cities instead of in the plantations. Some women leave their homes for distant countries and even to Middle Eastern countries for domestic work, which leads to children being placed in the care of elderly grandparents and other relatives. As a result, children are increasingly losing interest in their education, and their enthusiasm for attending school is diminishing. Furthermore, there are instances where children are unable to study at home due to their adverse environment. In some areas, reports indicate that children are also being subjected to abuse.

- **Nutritional Deficiencies**

Malnutrition is a significant problem among the children of the plantation community, primarily due to extreme poverty. The

critical period for intellectual development begins during a mother's pregnancy, and as a result of their impoverished conditions, many children are born with lower IQs and health issues. Consequently, they fall considerably behind their peers in terms of intellectual growth.

- **Weak Political Representation**

In 1947, Mr. Ramajayam was elected from the Aluthnuwara (Palankoda) constituency, followed by Mr. A.M.D. Rajan, who was elected from the national list in 1994. Since then, there has been no effective political representation to address the concerns of this community. This absence of strong representation has undeniably posed a significant threat to the fading ethnic identity of these individuals and the declining education system within the plantation community in Sabaragamuwa Province.

- **Ethnic Violence**:
  - In the year 1958, could be the first ethnic violence that occurred in Ratnapura Kawatta.
  - In August 1977, due to ethnic violence, a shop owned by person of Tamil origin in Kavatta, as well as several shops in Ratnapura and Eliyakodai, were set to flames.
  - Again, in August 1981, a very severe ethnic riot broke out, resulting in the burning of 95% of shop owned by Tamils in places like Rathnapura, Kavatta, Pelmadulla, Balangoda, Rakwanai, Nivithigal, and Eliyakodai. Additionally, 12 people were killed in Kavatta, including a doctor in Embilipitiya.

- Although ethnic riots broke out across the country in 1983, there were no major ethnic riot in Rathnapura district; however, one shop owner was killed in Nivithigala.
- Again in December 1985, some shops belonging to the Tamils in Ratnapura were burned due to ethnic riots.
- In 2001, during ethnic violence in the Palm Garden estate, many estate workers were attacked, and an entire housing line belonging to the estates worker was burned down, resulting in the death of a Sinhalese person.
- The Eliyakodai Kallumala estate, located among many Sinhalese villages, suffered significant damage in January 2006 due to severe violence, leading to the destruction of houses and substantial damage to property. As a result, 48 families were displaced and they moved to Pussallawa in Kandy district.
- Again, in 2007, there was ethnic violence in Vavelwatta Estate.

Conclusion

The ethnic identity of Tamils within the plantation community in the Sabaragamuwa region is facing major challenges. Issues such as inadequate education, limited learning opportunities, a lack of social awareness, and indifference towards liberation are contributing to the erosion of this identity. By ensuring access to

quality education, we can effectively protect and preserve the fading ethnic identity of this community.

Recommendations

1. Establish high-quality preschools in the churches of the Sabaragamuwa region.
2. Implement programs for health and family counseling, along with awareness initiatives, through the arms of community responsibilities of the church. Expand the diocesan mission of Estate Community Development Mission (ECDM) to the Sabaragamuwa region.
3. Advocate for the enhancement of Tamil schools in Sabaragamuwa by promoting awareness through the National Education Commission of Sri Lanka and urging the government to focus on educational needs of the Tamil schools.
4. Initiatives of inter-religious cooperation for justice and peace.

(johnsonpsk@gmail.com)

Qualitative and Quantitative Growth to Ensure Sustainability: Proposals for an Urban Church Community

Revd. S. Balasundaram

The Church of the Good Shepherd, particularly its Tamil congregation, has witnessed significant changes over the past three decades. The evolving demographic trends, leadership transitions, and generational shifts have shaped the church's present and future outlook. This report delves into the history of the last thirty years, examining the aging senior members, the challenges faced by the second level of leadership, the emerging third-level leadership, and the involvement of migrant youth. It also explores how the different generational cohorts— Generation X, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha—view and engage with church life, and anticipates the needs of Generation Beta, expected to come of age from 2025 onwards. This finding is based on experiential research over a decade. (2014 – 2024)

Historical Overview (1994-2024)
1990s: Years considered for the research
In the early 1990s, the Tamil congregation of the Church of the Good Shepherd was predominantly composed of first-generation immigrants. These individuals, now in their senior years, were instrumental in establishing the church's foundation. The church served as a cultural and religious hub, offering a sense of community and belonging in a foreign land. The leadership during this period was heavily reliant on the wisdom

and experience of these senior members, who brought with them a deep commitment to their faith and traditions.

2000s: Growth and Expansion

The early 2000s marked a period of growth for the church. The congregation expanded as more Tamil-speaking immigrants arrived, seeking a place to worship and connect with others from their homeland. The leadership began to transition as the original founders aged. A second level of leadership emerged, composed of the children of the original members and newer immigrants. However, this generation faced its own set of challenges, including balancing traditional values with the demands of life in a new country.

The church also began to see the involvement of younger members, who were often more educated, and some are not so, making crucial bridges between the older and younger generations. These individuals, however, often found themselves caught between the traditional expectations of their elders and the modern realities they faced in their daily lives.

2010s: The Challenges of Transition

By the 2010s, the church was grappling with the aging of its senior members. Many of the original founders had passed away, leaving a leadership void. The second-level leaders, though committed, faced limitations due to their own responsibilities and the changing dynamics of church life. The congregation also began to experience a shift in its demographic makeup, with an increasing number of migrant youths joining the church.

This period also saw the rise of the third level of leadership, composed of individuals aged 14-25. This group, having grown up in a vastly different cultural and technological environment than their predecessors, brought new perspectives and

challenges to the church. Their engagement with church life was often influenced by their exposure to global cultures and the digital age, which contrasted with the more traditional views of the older generations.

Generational Dynamics and Church Life
Generation X (Born 1965-1980)

Generation X, now in their 40s and 50s, occupies a critical role in the church's leadership. Many of them grew up in the church and have witnessed its evolution over the years. They possess a deep respect for the church's traditions but are also aware of the need for change to keep the congregation relevant to younger generations.

This generation has been instrumental in maintaining the church's cultural heritage while also introducing gradual changes to accommodate the evolving needs of the congregation. However, their leadership is often marked by a struggle to balance traditional values with modern demands. They face the challenge of appealing to both the older members, who may resist change, and the younger members, who demand it.

Generation Z (Born 1997-2012)

Generation Z represents the third level of leadership within the church. Having grown up in a digital age, their approach to church life is markedly different from that of their elders. They are more likely to question traditional practices and seek a more inclusive and engaging church environment. Technology plays a significant role in their lives, and they often expect the church to integrate digital tools into its operations and outreach.

This generation is also characterized by its global outlook and concern for social justice issues. They are less likely to adhere to

strict religious practices and more likely to seek a church experience that resonates with their personal values and beliefs. Their involvement in church activities is often driven by a desire for community and meaningful engagement rather than a sense of obligation.

Generation Alpha (Born 2013-2024)

Generation Alpha, currently in their childhood and early teenage years, is growing up in an environment dominated by technology and instant access to information. Their short-term concentration spans and reliance on digital devices are shaping their experiences and expectations of church life.

For this generation, the traditional church structure may seem less relevant. They are more likely to engage with church activities that are interactive, visually engaging, and technology driven. The challenge for the church is to create an environment that not only holds their attention but also instills in them a sense of spiritual belonging and community.

The Role of Migrant Youth

Migrant youth have increasingly become a significant part of the Tamil congregation. Often arriving with their families, they bring with them different cultural perspectives and expectations. Their involvement in the church is essential for its continued growth and relevance. However, integrating these youth into the existing church structure requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges their unique experiences and challenges.

Migrant youth often face the dual challenge of adapting to a new culture while maintaining their cultural and religious identity. The church serves as a crucial support system in this regard, offering a space where they can connect with others who share similar

experiences. However, the church must also evolve to meet the needs of these youth, who may have different expectations of church life compared to those who were born and raised in the host country.

The Future: Catering to Generation Beta (Born 2025 Onwards)

As the church looks to the future, it must prepare to cater to Generation Beta, who will begin to come of age around 2025. This generation will be even more immersed in technology than Generation Alpha, with artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and other advanced technologies likely to play a significant role in their lives.

For Generation Beta, traditional church practices may seem increasingly outdated. The church will need to find ways to remain relevant to this generation, potentially by embracing new technologies and finding innovative ways to deliver spiritual messages. This might involve creating digital worship experiences, using social media as a tool for engagement, and developing apps that cater to the spiritual needs of this generation.

At the same time, the church must ensure that it does not lose its core values and traditions in the process. The challenge will be to strike a balance between innovation and tradition, ensuring that the church remains a place of spiritual growth and community for all generations.

Strategies for Future Growth and Relevance

1. Intergenerational Dialogue

- Encouraging open communication between the different generations within the church is crucial. This can be

facilitated through regular intergenerational meetings where members of different age groups can share their perspectives and ideas. Such dialogue can help bridge the gap between traditional and modern viewpoints, fostering a more inclusive church environment.

2. Technology Integration

- To engage younger generations, the church must embrace technology. This could include live-streaming services, creating a church app, and using social media to connect with the congregation. For Generation Alpha and Beta, interactive and digital elements in church services and activities will be essential to maintain their interest and engagement.

3. Leadership Development

- Developing a robust leadership pipeline is essential for the church's future. This involves identifying and nurturing potential leaders from Generation Z and Alpha, providing them with opportunities for leadership development and mentorship. This will ensure a smooth transition of leadership in the coming years.

4. Cultural Relevance

- As the congregation becomes more diverse, the church must find ways to remain culturally relevant. This could involve incorporating different cultural practices into church services, celebrating a wider range of festivals, and offering support to migrant families as they navigate their new environment.

5. Community Engagement

- The church should continue to play a central role in the lives of its members by offering programs and activities that cater to the needs of different generations. This

could include youth groups, senior support services, and community outreach programs that address the specific challenges faced by the congregation.

6. Recognizing and Understanding Behavioral Patterns:

- **Assessment of Current Behaviors**: Conduct surveys, focus groups, or informal discussions to identify habitual behaviors and traditions within the congregation. Understanding what behaviors are inherited or habitual helps in determining which ones to nurture and which ones to evolve.
- **Cultural Sensitivity**: Acknowledge that these behaviors are often tied to cultural identity and respect them as part of the church's heritage. This helps to build trust and openness when discussing potential changes.

7. Promoting Positive Behavioral Patterns:

- **Highlighting Positive Traditions**: Emphasize the value of traditions that contribute to the church's spiritual and communal life. Encourage the continuation of practices that promote unity, respect, and devotion.
- **Role Models and Mentorship**: Encourage senior members to serve as role models for younger generations. By visibly practicing positive behaviors, they can influence younger members to adopt these practices.

8. Addressing Negative or Outdated Patterns:

- **Open Dialogue**: Create safe spaces for discussions about behavioral patterns that may no longer serve the congregation's growth or inclusivity goals. These conversations should be framed in a way that respects the past while looking toward the future.
- **Educational Programs**: Offer workshops or seminars that address specific behavioral issues, such as

resistance to change or generational divides. Educational efforts can help shift perspectives and encourage members to embrace new ways of thinking.

- **Gradual Change**: Introduce changes slowly and thoughtfully, allowing time for the congregation to adjust. Sudden shifts can cause resistance, whereas gradual changes are more likely to be accepted.

9. **Encouraging Flexibility and Adaptability:**
- **Empowering Leaders**: Equip church leaders with the tools and training to navigate and manage behavioral changes. Leaders who are adaptable can model flexibility for the rest of the congregation.
- **Fostering a Growth Mindset**: Encourage the idea that the church is a living, evolving community. Promote the concept that change can coexist with tradition and that both are necessary for the church's growth.

10. **Integrating Behavioral Change with Growth Strategies:**
- **Leadership Development**: As part of leadership training, include components on managing change and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. New leaders should be equipped to handle both inherited and new behaviors in a way that promotes growth.
- **Community Engagement**: Engage with the broader community to understand how behavioral patterns within the church align or diverge from those in the surrounding society. This can provide insight into which behaviors to adapt to remain relevant and welcoming to newcomers.
- **Technology Integration**: Use technology to gently encourage new behaviors, such as using apps for daily devotionals or organizing online forums for discussions.

Technology can serve as a bridge between traditional practices and modern conveniences.

11. Continuous Reflection and Feedback:

- **Regular Feedback Loops**: Implement regular check-ins or feedback mechanisms to assess how well the congregation is adapting to changes in behavioral patterns. This can be through surveys, suggestion boxes, or community meetings.
- **Celebrating Successes**: Acknowledge and celebrate when the congregation successfully adapts to new behaviors or revitalizes positive traditions. This reinforcement encourages further positive change.

Remark - Balancing habitual and inherited behavioral patterns is crucial for the Church of the Good Shepherd's Tamil congregation to ensure sustainable growth. By fostering positive behaviors, addressing outdated patterns with sensitivity, and promoting flexibility, the church can successfully navigate the challenges of inter-generational change. This approach, integrated with leadership development, community engagement, and technology, will help the congregation remain a vibrant and relevant spiritual home for all members.

Qualitative Growth:

1. **Inter-generational Dialogue**: Fostering open communication between senior members and younger generations can enhance mutual understanding and respect. This ensures that the church remains a cohesive community where traditions are honored while new ideas are welcomed.
2. **Leadership Development**: Investing in leadership programs for younger members will ensure that the

church is equipped with capable leaders who are aligned with the church's values yet innovative in their approach to future challenges.

3. **Cultural Relevance**: Staying attuned to the evolving cultural context of the Tamil community and the broader society will help the church maintain its relevance. This could involve integrating contemporary worship styles, addressing modern societal issues, and promoting inclusivity.

4. **Technology Integration**: Embracing digital platforms for worship, communication, and outreach will make the church more accessible to younger generations who are digital natives. This also includes using technology for church administration and community engagement.

5. **Spiritual Growth**: Ensuring that the church continues to nurture the spiritual lives of its members, regardless of age, through relevant sermons, activities, and support systems, is key to its qualitative growth.

Quantitative Growth:

1. **Membership Expansion**: Attracting new members, particularly from younger generations and new families, will be crucial for the church's longevity. This could involve outreach programs, community events, and partnerships with local organizations.

2. **Resource Allocation**: Effective use of the church's resources, including finances, facilities, and volunteers, can support growth initiatives. This includes investing in youth programs, technology, and community services.

3. **Community Engagement**: Expanding the church's presence in the community through social services, charity work, and cultural events can increase its influence and attract more members.

4. **Program Development**: Offering a diverse range of programs that cater to different age groups and interests can boost participation and membership retention. This might include youth groups, family services, senior support programs, and educational workshops.

Conclusion

The Church of the Good Shepherd's Tamil congregation stands at a crossroads, with its senior members aging and new generations stepping into leadership roles. The church's future success will depend on its ability to adapt to the changing needs and expectations of its members while remaining true to its core values. By embracing intergenerational dialogue, integrating technology, developing future leaders, staying culturally relevant, and engaging with the community, the church can continue to thrive and serve as a spiritual home for generations to come. As Generation Beta emerges, the church must be prepared to meet their needs, ensuring that it remains a place of worship, community, and spiritual growth for all.

In the context of sustainable development, both qualitative and quantitative growth are crucial for the Church of the Good Shepherd's Tamil congregation as it navigates the challenges of an aging membership and the emergence of new generations. Here's how these aspects can be applied:

Handling habitual and inherited behavioral patterns within the Church of the Good Shepherd's Tamil congregation is essential for fostering both qualitative and quantitative growth. These patterns, which are deeply ingrained in the community's culture

and traditions, can either support or hinder progress. Here's how the church can address these patterns effectively:

The Church of the Good Shepherd's Tamil congregation must balance qualitative and quantitative growth to ensure its sustainability. By focusing on leadership development, inter-generational dialogue, technology integration, and community engagement, the church can remain a vibrant and relevant spiritual home for current and future generations.

Christian political engagement with a focus on responsible exercise of franchise

Rev. Suren Watson

Introduction

Citizens of Sri Lanka voted on the 21st of September 2024 to elect a candidate to be the next president of the country. Even though more than 17 million Sri Lankans were eligible to vote at this election, it has been reported that 3.5 million had not cast their vote. There could be several reasons why people didn't vote. Some may have thought that their vote was insignificant and didn't matter.   If we think of it from a statistical perspective that is true. One vote out of several millions is statistically insignificant. Therefore, some may have been tempted to keep away from casting their ballot. However, it is a key responsibility of all citizens to express their preference in electing their president. Our vote as citizens is significant because in a democracy it is the people who are sovereign, and we select and choose our leaders through elections. But how do we arrive at a decision on which candidate to vote for? This was a dilemma I had before the election, and so I reflected on it and wrote down a modest proposal on how to think through the decision of whom to vote for as Christians. It was not meant to favour any candidate but to suggest a process for arriving at a decision. What I initially wrote was also circulated among those in my local church before the election. This current article contains that proposal and also looks ahead beyond the elections to

recommend how we can be responsible citizens as Christians. Some of the thinking expressed here has been influenced by learning and insights gained through my participation in the course titled 'Training on Evidence Based Religious Engagement and Development' conducted by the Cathedral Institute of Education and Formation (CIEF) during the recent months.

Christian participation in political life

In some segments of the Christian world, there is a conviction that Christians must keep a healthy distance from the affairs of the world. From that point of view Christians should focus more on their own spiritual life rather than on the so called 'secular' life of the wider community. The space of politics is a key part of the world with which such Christians want to keep a minimum level of involvement. Part of the reason for this may be stemming from our theological understanding from Scripture. Much of the New Testament letters are written to the small emerging Christian communities living under the shadow of the all-powerful Roman empire. So, there is a greater focus on transforming and changing the individual rather than society at large. The expectation that Christ would return soon, may have also contributed to this. However, the Christian gospel had the potency to subvert and undermine the power politics of the day with the central message that the Crucified Jesus was Lord. The Lordship of Christ meant that Caesar was not. It was also calling people to a new way of life, and the church was to be a subversive counter cultural society. Even deeper than that runs the message that God was in Christ reconciling the world to

himself, with a comprehensive cosmic scope. This salvation and transformation were not limited to isolated individuals, but the entire world, including the world of politics, all of which can be seen as the outworking of creation and the mandate given to humankind at the dawn of creation (Genesis 1:27-28). So, while submitting to human political authorities is at times held as the model for living for those early Christian communities (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14), today as Christians, we cannot limit ourselves to such a view and ignore the Christian engagement in politics whether for good or for ill throughout the past 2000 years, since Christ.

From the perspective of a more Biblical Christian worldview a Christian must see involvement in political life and society as part of their commitment to living a faithful Christian life under God. Much of the Old Testament is about how the social, political and economic life of the people of Israel were to be ordered based on God's commands and expectations. Even the whole notion of the kingdom of God or the reign of God, does have political overtones and this was central to the message of Jesus. What is clear is that for Christians our ultimate allegiance is not to a political ideology, a political party, or an economic model but to Christ himself. So therefore, our political engagement also should be influenced by our theology. We cannot limit the sphere of Christ's lordship to the privacy of our lives. Our responsibility cannot even be limited to praying for the leaders of our country (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

Collectively the Church also has a prophetic role to play in society. This prophetic role is modelled on the Old Testament prophets, whom God used to speak his word to the kings and the rulers of the nation of Israel. They spoke truth to the powerful and to the common person on the street. The prophets were disliked and persecuted because they often spoke an uncomfortable message. They were not afraid to point out what was wrong and point the right way. They reminded leaders that they were accountable to God and pronounced God's judgement. The true prophets were not aligned with any king, but were an independent voice, speaking God's truth into the context. Jesus was also a prophet, who was not aligned with any of the powers of his day but spoke out fearlessly as an independent voice. So, when it comes to political engagement, the church should not align with any political party but maintain its independence. The church needs to discern its prophetic role and not be afraid to stand for the reign of God within society. In a democracy exercising one's franchise and voting at elections is the minimum level of involvement for a citizen. Therefore, Christians should exercise their duty as citizens and vote wisely and responsibly. Beyond that Christians need to engage in political life to hold leaders accountable and should seek to influence politics for the betterment of society. While individuals are free to align themselves with political parties, it is important that collectively, the church should always remain independent and non-aligned so that it can fulfil its prophetic role in society.

Context of this election

The presidential election that we faced was very different from elections of the past. It was being held in the context where the president elected by the people at the previous presidential election of 2019, was no longer in office. Former President Gotabaya Rajapaksa was forced out of office in 2022 due to the pressure brought on by the popular protest movement known as the 'Aragalaya' which called for his resignation. This protest movement arose as people blamed the political leadership for Sri Lanka's economic collapse, which was having a debilitating effect on the everyday lives of most people. It was also a moment, when the failure of all political leaders since Independence and the failure of the political system was openly acknowledged. There were calls for a system change and overhaul of the entire political establishment. There was a cry that Sri Lanka deserves better and must do better. Following Gotabaya Rajapaksa's resignation, Ranil Wickremasinghe was thereafter elected by majority vote in Parliament through the prescribed legal and constitutional process.   Under his leadership during the past two years, the country had been able to achieve a measure of political and economic stability and take steps towards economic recovery under an IMF programme. However, it is fair to say that during the past two years that there had not been anything in the direction of 'system change' and it has been politics as usual. Having led Sri Lanka during a critical time of crisis, President Ranil Wickremasinghe believed he had earned the right to stand as a candidate in this election and to seek the people's mandate, so that he may serve as president

beyond the two years he has had. The other two leading contenders in this election were Anura Kumara Dissanayake as the candidate of the National People's Power (NPP) and Sajith Premadasa as the candidate of Samagi Jana Sandanaya (SJS). Despite having a total of 38 candidates vying for the presidency including some well-known politicians, it was without dispute that the only candidates with a realistic chance of winning this election were these three candidates. Therefore, I argued that if voters wanted their vote to have an impact on the outcome of the election, it would make sense to cast their vote for one of these three leading candidates. The other candidates may have been able to contribute to the political conversation on the state of the nation, critique the other candidates and propose policies, but they had no realistic chance of getting elected as president. Therefore, for decision making purposes, narrowing down our choices to the three leading candidates seemed a sensible way forward.

Choosing the best candidate

When we vote to elect a president, we want to make the best possible choice out of the available candidates. There is an understandable view that ultimately our selection comes down to choosing the lesser evil. But I suggest that this approach may not always be helpful for decision making, as we also need to consider the good that the candidate may be capable of, rather than only focusing on the potential harm that they may represent. Nevertheless, we will always need to consider the potential good and the potential harm of any candidate when

thinking through our decision. Considering the voting decision more positively, the best choice would be the candidate who in our opinion is the best out of the available candidates. But it is important that we think about the question of 'best candidate *for whom?*' in forming our views. It is therefore good at the initial stage to be self-reflective about whose best interest we have in mind in our voting choice. Is it our own personal interest? Is it the interest of our ethnic community? Is it the interest of the institutional church and the Christian minority? Is it in the interest of the most deprived and marginalised segments of Sri Lankan society? Or is it the interest of Sri Lankan society at large? For example, given the sharp increase in income taxes resulting in the middle class experiencing a significant drop in income, it can be very enticing to vote for a candidate who promised to reduce income taxes, ensuring that we have more money for our family. Or if we are a government sector employee whose job may be at risk, we will naturally want to vote for a candidate who assures that there will be no job losses, or even better to promise a pay increase. If we are Tamils, we may vote for the candidate who offers the most to Tamils in the Northern and Eastern regions. As Christians we may also want to vote for a president who is most accommodating and friendly towards the expansion and growth of the church in Sri Lanka.

There is no reason why these different interests and motivations of who is best may not converge in a single candidate. However, when faced with a choice, as Christians we are challenged not to look at our own interests alone but consider what is best for the

people of our country as a whole, particularly for those who are struggling to survive. This does not mean that the candidate who promises the biggest economic handouts to the poor is the obvious choice. Economics is not so straightforward and, in any case, should not be the only consideration. We need long term inclusive, sustainable economic growth and development as a country while offering support and better opportunities to those who are vulnerable. So, I emphasised that what was important was that we don't make our narrow personal interest the sole criteria for our voting choice, but are willing to think more broadly on who will be the best candidate to give leadership to our country, bearing in mind that the presidency comes with a five year term.

Governance and Economy

There are many weaknesses and failures that are evident in the politics of our country and the way successive governments have performed over the years. Some of the issues include the lack of competent and sincere politicians who are committed to serving the country above self, corruption, inefficient management, lack of accountability, poor decision-making processes leading to disastrous decisions, authoritarian leadership, failure to respect the rule of law, lack of sustained and consistent policies and a highly politicised public sector. Some of these weaknesses were the direct contributory factors to the economic crisis that Sri Lanka faced during the last few years. Underlying this is also a flawed constitution that failed to ensure good governance and an executive presidency, bestowed

with excessive powers and inadequate checks and balances. Therefore, real and lasting system change can only become a reality through constitutional change and abolishing the executive presidency. A candidate who is willing to acknowledge these issues and in our judgement is most committed to fixing the system and more likely to deliver on such a commitment should be favoured over others. However, while acknowledging the priority for a candidate who is committed to good governance, we must recognise that we are in the early stages of an economic recovery, following a state of bankruptcy. We have entered into an agreement with the IMF on a bailout programme that will help our economic recovery. All the candidates are committed to the IMF programme, though some have expressed a commitment to renegotiating some aspects of the programme for the benefit of the country. Economists warn that unless the economy is managed carefully, we could face another economic crisis in the future, which would result in a worsening situation for all. So therefore, the economy should be managed based on the best available expertise and using an evidence-based approach rather than on ideology or short-term popularity. In practice this may mean that a candidate may not be able to fulfil all the election pledges they make.   We should recall that the economic crisis was precipitated by tax cuts under the Gotabaya Rajapaksa presidency which shrunk government revenue to an unsustainable level. This is only one bad example of poor economic management. Therefore, Sri Lanka cannot afford to have poor economic management in the future and must ensure that decisions are based on sound economic advice, to avoid

another economic crisis and achieve economic growth. Therefore, in making our choice of candidate, I proposed that we ought to consider both governance as well as economic management as key criteria. The indivisibility of development means that governance and economics must both be considered. Our country needs a leader who can deliver on both these areas.

Basis for making our decision

One of the critiques of the executive presidential system is that the personality and charisma of the candidate can have a strong influence on voter perceptions of the competency and character of the candidate. For example, aspects such as appearance, public speaking skills and personal charm can subconsciously influence our perceptions about candidates and can lead to emotional decision making. This can be true particularly as we get closer to the election date, and we see video clips of what candidates are saying at the election rallies on stage in our news channels. Considering the enormous responsibility that comes with the presidency, we should avoid an emotional decision and try to make a rational and reasoned decision. One basis for such a decision or evidence available to us are the election manifestos of the candidates. These represent promises and proposals to the public. All candidates seek to appeal to the public by making attractive promises in manifestos with specific promises designed to appeal to different segments of voters. They also express the vision of the candidate and general policy directions that they expect to take. But we should bear in mind

that manifestos promise good things for the people, and they do not talk about potentially unpopular policy proposals. I do not think that any manifesto would contain a proposal that is objectionable or sounds bad. There is also a serious question as to the basis on which the proposals were made. It is possible that many of the promises are simply made to appeal to different segments of voters. It is good to read through the different manifestos to understand the thinking of the candidates and the proposals that they bring. However, given that election manifestos are put forward only a few weeks before the election with each candidate wanting to make their manifesto more appealing than the competition, I argued that we must not rely too heavily on the election manifesto in making our judgement.

I suggested that the more reliable basis or evidence to go by would be firstly the past performance of the three leading candidates and secondly the team that surrounds them. All three candidates are seasoned politicians, so who they are is no secret. They have all been party leaders and run as candidates for the presidency in past presidential elections. However, only Ranil Wickremasinghe has held the office of president. As a result, his policies, performance and priorities as president are known. Anura Kumara Dissananayake and Sajith Premadasa in contrast have not held that position. So, we have to predict how they will perform in office, while being cognizant that the power associated with the presidency has the power to corrupt. Therefore, we must consider their positions, performance and priorities in their role in parliament up to date, as well as the

leadership they have exercised within their party. Sajith Premadasa has served as a Cabinet Minister (2015-2019). Anura Kumara Dissanayake by comparison has been more distant from power and government, having briefly served as a Cabinet Minister (2004/5). The fact that he has become a leading contender for the presidency despite securing only 3.16% at the 2019 presidential election is evidence of how the political and economic crisis of the recent past has generated support for a third force in Sri Lankan politics. Therefore, his candidature represents the most promise and potential for positive change in our political culture for some, while for others he represents the most risk for the country's future because of concerns of the JVPs ideological background and history, and lack of experience in governing. But we must make our decision based on what is known about all the candidates through their words and actions in the past as politicians. It is better if we look back on the performance and character displayed by the candidates in their political careers and their reputation thus far.

The other factor that must be considered is the team that is surrounding the candidate both in terms of advice and expertise and political support. The presidency is not a lone job, where an all-knowing leader makes decisions alone. The presidency requires a leader who will be surrounded and supported by a good team of advisors and MPs. The president also needs to be willing to listen and take advice. We need a president who will make decisions based on evidence and be willing to make changes if it is required. We need a president who does not

surround himself with an echo chamber or 'yes men' but will discuss and seek advice before making decisions. When we think of the team it does not only refer to the faces that are seen on stage alongside the candidate but others who may be working behind the scenes as well as those who stand in support of the candidate. Therefore, I concluded that the best evidence for our decision making should be the past performance and personal reputation of the candidates in their roles thus far as well as the quality of the advisors and MPs that stand in support of the candidate, rather than the promises in the manifestos. The extent to which they are able to implement the vision that is expressed in the manifestos will depend on their own character and the quality of their team.

Summarising the approach

In this article I have shared my perspective on how we should make our voting decision at the presidential election. I began by saying that as Christians we must take our responsibility as citizens seriously and vote responsibly with a reasoned decision. To do this I stressed that we must firstly set aside narrow self-interest and focus on the broader interest of the country, particularly those who are most disadvantaged and select the candidate who in our opinion is best for the country. I highlighted the importance of considering both governance and economic management as the key performance areas for a future president. Therefore, I identified both these as important aspects to consider when we think about the candidates. Finally, I concluded that the best evidence to use for our judgements was

not the election manifesto or the soundbites from political rallies, but the character and performance of the candidates in the past in their political careers along with a consideration for the team that surrounds and supports the candidate. In the end, we all need to judge for ourselves, and make our decision. We recognised that there are no perfect or ideal candidates. Every candidate had strengths and weaknesses; pros and cons; risks and uncertainty. We had to predict and forecast to some extent the potential performance of candidates as we made our decision.

Post-election recommendations
The presidential election was conducted peacefully, and citizens elected the NPP candidate Anura Kumara Dissanayake as president of Sri Lanka. Those who voted   should reflect on how they arrived at their decision on which candidate to vote for and what aspects they considered as important in arriving at their decisions. Some may be happy with the election outcome while others who voted for other candidates might feel disappointed. However, we all hope and pray that the newly elected president will perform well for everyone's sake.

Our responsibility as Christian citizens does not end when we cast our vote. We do not go home as spectators after a match has been won or lost. We need to continue to be responsible citizens after casting our vote at the presidential election. Therefore, I end this article with some recommendations on how

we should continue in our engagement beyond the recently concluded presidential election.

1. **Stay informed**: We need to be aware of what decisions and policies are being discussed and made on our behalf by the government. Without knowing what is going on, we will not be able to have any engagement or even an informed opinion.

2. **Vote responsible:** The upcoming general election as an opportunity to purge from our parliament all unfit and unsuitable MPs, who are known to have been corrupt and reject leaders who support and protect corrupt politicians. We must instead vote for candidates who will represent the best interest of the people and work towards the development of Sri Lanka.

3. **Engage:** We need to engage in whatever ways that are possible through the different forums we are part of in order to advocate for good governance. Similarly, we need to be willing to engage with the system, by sharing our expertise for the public good, rather than keeping our distance.

4. **Prophetic church**: The church collectively needs to remain independent and non-aligned with any political party, so that it can retain its credibility, and be a prophetic voice in society. The church needs to maintain its critical engagement to hold elected leaders responsible and accountable to the people and to God. The church must speak and act with courage as it seeks

to give expression to what it discerns as the mind of Christ and the will of God for the good of all people.

5. **Be the change:** Finally, as individuals we need to live as responsible and good citizens and be positive examples to those around us. Though we like to blame the leaders of our country, it is we who collectively give them power and their failures also reflect some of the brokenness and failure of our own society and public life. So, while we want to see change at the top, all citizens will need to correct themselves and act with accountability and responsibility, with truth and honesty in their own spheres of influence and work, so that corruption which has spread to all areas of society can be truly eradicated or at least limited.

Part III

Supplementary Reading

[The Power of Tears] Political Theology of Living in Christ with People

C.S. Song
(Reproduced from CCA 1981 Assembly)

Sinhala　　　　**Tamil**

The Wall Every Stone of which Cost a Human life

The Great Wall is one of the marvels of China, even of the world. Winding through North China from Shanhikuan on the coast into Kansu Province in the Northwest, it stretches for more than 1,500 miles in space and for more than two thousand years in time. In recent years it has been transformed from historic ruins into cultural glory. It is visited by Presidents of powerful nations. It has served as a stage of geo-political games played with great relish by aggressive politicians. It has also won admiration from innocent tourists both near and far. The Great Wall, or the Ten Thousand Li Long Wall, as the Chinese call it, has leapt out of the past to play a new role in the life of individuals, nations, and the world.

But do Presidents of powerful nations remember? Are those who play "body-politics" aware? Can tens of thousands of tourists imagine? Will the world care to be reminded? It is said that a million people perished in building the Wall, that every

stone cost a human life. Small wonder, Shih Huang Ti, the despotic emperor of the first empire of China in the third century B.C, has won undying hatred for building this defense wall against the nomads of the Mongolian steppe.

Over the centuries there have grown around this monument of cruelty stories and legends, telling endless tragedies that invaded the lives of common people, humiliated them, uprooted them, and destroyed them. Reflected in these stories of the people-folk stories- is not only the remote past, but the immediate present, and perhaps the distant future. Projected in them is the universal struggle of people to be human, free, and authentic. I would like to tell you one of those folktales as we wrestle together with the political ethic of the cross of Jesus. It is a folktale called "The Faithful Lady Meng".

This happened in the reign of the wicked, unjust Emperor Ch'in Shih Huang-ti. He was this time that the Huns would break into the country from the north and not leave him any peace. In order to keep them in check, he decided to build a wall along the whole northern frontier of China. But no sooner was one piece built than another fell down, and the wall made no progress. Then a wise (!) man said to him. "A wall like this, which is over ten thousand miles long, can be built only if you immure a human being in every mile of the wall. Each mile will then have its guardian". It was easy for the emperor to follow this advice, for he regarded his subjects as so much grass and weeds, and whole land began to tremble under this threat.

Plans were then made for human sacrifice in great mass. At the last minute "an ingenious scholar" suggested to the emperor that a man called Wan would be enough "since Wan means ten thousand". Soldiers were dispatched at once to seize Wan who was sitting with his bride at the wedding feast. He was carried off by the heartless soldiers, leaving Lady Men, his bride, in tears.

Eventually, heedless of the fatigues of the journey, she travelled over mountains and through rivers, to find the bones of her husband. When she saw the stupendous wall, she did not know how to find the bones. There was nothing to be done, and she sat down and wept. Her weeping so affected the wall that it collapsed and laid bare her husband's bones.

When the Emperor heard of Meng Chiang and how she was seeking her husband, he wanted to see her himself. When she was brought before him, her unearthly beauty so struck him that he decided to make her Empress. She knew she could not avoid her fate and, therefore, she agreed on three conditions. First, a festival lasting forty-nine days should be held in honour of her husband; second, the Emperor, with all his officials, should be present at the burial; and third, he should build a terrace forty nine feet high on the bank of the river, where she wanted to make a sacrifice to her husband.....Ch'in Shih Huang-ti granted all her requests at once.

When everything was ready, she climbed onto the terrace and began to curse the Emperor in a loud voice for all his cruelty and wickedness. Although this made the Emperor very angry, he held his peace. But when she jumped from the terrace into the river, he flew into a rage and ordered his soldiers to cut her body into little pieces and grind her bones to powder. When they did this, the little pieces and grind her bones to powder. When they did this, the little pieces changed into little silver fish, in which the faithful soul Meng Chiang lives forever.[1]

The Wall made No Progress

It is very strange, isn't it? The wall that would defend the nation from nomadic invaders made no progress. "No sooner was one piece built", the folktale tells us, "than another fell down." Was there something wrong with the architectural blue-prints? This could not have been the case. The officials in charge of this colossal work must have hired all the first-class architects available at that time; for even today the Great Wall is considered a remarkable engineering feat. Perhaps the materials used were of inferior quality and could not stand up to the demands of the plans. This must be ruled out, because at stake was imperial defense; in actual fact bricks and stones in the Wall are found bound together by excellent mortar. Many of the stones are huge blocks hewn from granite, some of them fourteen feet long and three or four feet thick![2] If it was not due to faulty plans or material of poor quality, then little progress in the construction of the Wall must have been caused by the sabotage by workers. But again, this is absolutely out of the question. How

could the conscript laborers under strict oversight of the imperial army outmaneuver the emperor's order?

Still, the Wall made no progress-the Wall is essential to national defense. Even we are puzzled. We want to know why. Like our ancient forebears in China, and for that matter in Egypt, Babylonia, even in Israel and Judah, we are very defense conscious. We want to defend our national honor; this is patriotism. We are duty bound to fight for our land; this is good citizenship. We must protect the truth of our faith and our religion; this is "orthodoxism". We defend our nation, our religion, our cause, right and left. We behave, as individuals and as a collective body, as if our life and our survival depend totally on how strong our defense-instincts are, how effectively our security mechanism works. Surely, it is a cause for alarm that the emperor's great wall made no progress. Even when our own little defense walls cannot get a good start, there should be reason for panic.

Meanwhile, the whole tragic affair of the Wall is slowly unfolded in the folktale. In the midst of great agitation, the emperor's counselor offered the following counsel: "A wall like this, which is over ten thousand miles long, can be built only if you immure a human being in every mile of the wall. Each mile then will have its guardian." What counsel! Ten thousand lives for building the Wall! This is insanity! This is inhumanity! But the emperor responded to the counsel as if it were a flash of revelation from heaven. And the folk storyteller confides to us a terrible secret: "The emperor regarded his subjects as so much grass and weeds."

This is the starting point of political theology implied in this folktale. Do folktales contain theological and political insights? Yes, folktales too have political theology. In fact, the kind of political theology we find in folktales too have political theology. In fact, the kind of political theology we find in folktales is more genuine, more powerful, more heartbreaking and also more heartening than many "Christian" political theologies. Folktale political theology is conceived in the womb of people's experience. In the darkness of that womb a new life is hatched in people's tears and laughter; it struggles to grow in people's hope and despair. When the time arrives, it bursts open the depths of humanity and becomes part of the world of joy and pain. "The history of humankind," says an American sociologist, "is a history of pain."[3] How true! But this is only half the truth. "The history of humankind," we must go on to say, "is the history of hope."

Pain alone does not bring sense to life. Pain alone does not reveal the meaning of history. Pain alone does not ennoble humanity. And pain alone does not make the present worth living. There must be, besides pain, hope. There must be, besides the present, future. There must be, besides one dreadful destruction after another, one joyful construction after another. Life is a race against pain. History is a never-ending process of construction on the ruins of destruction. It is this kind of political theology that we find in some of the finest folk literature, folk songs, folk dance, and folk drams. This is the political theology of the people, or minjung, as Korean Christians like to call it. In these "folk things", we Christians may perceive

reflections of the cross. In them we may also gain a glimpse of resurrection. This will surprise us, humble us, and excite us. After all, "Christian" political theology should be no more and no less than "folk" political theology – political of the people. This, in fact, was the political theology of Jesus Christ – the theology of living with people.

Emperors and rulers, too, have their political theology. This we must know. This, the people must be fully aware of. The essence of political theology holds by those who monopolize political and military powers is what is said in our folktale. "The Emperor regarded his subjects as so much grass and weeds." This was the premise of Shih Huang Ti's political theology. This was the assumption of Pharaohs' political theology – the Pharaohs who wasted and destroyed millions and tens of millions of human lives in the building of pyramids to manifest royal glory and to achieve the vain hope of physical immortality. This, too, was the justification of Hitler's demonic political theology which drove several millions of Jews to death in the gas chambers. The atrocious genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot's Cambodia is still too painful to mention.

But we have not finished our list. The same premise, the same assumption and the same justification underlies the national policy of many repressive regimes in Asia today. All of these regimes, says a speaker at the consultation on "Patterns of Domination and People's Movements in Asia", organized by the Christian Conference of Asia and held in Manila, Philippines, in 1979.

stress the moral claims of the state national discipline, national unity, the importance for national development and the mischievousness and divisiveness of politis.[4]

The rulers who regard people as so much grass and weeds, the power holders who use people as mere tools for economic development and national defense, make moral claims too. Their moral claims are said to be guided by the policy of the highest order – national security.

What national security? What does it look like? What shape does it have? It is a god – a cruel savage god! It is a god that feeds on human flesh and blood. Since ancient times, the world has known many gods that had very large appetites for human flesh. Practically every tribe and every nation, East or West, had that kind of god. Animal flesh was not good enough for them. They refused to be placated with animal blood. To gain their favor, nothing less than human blood would do. The ancient Phoenicians offered human babies on a red-hot altar to their fire god Moloch. The Canaanites had to cater to the unnatural lust of Chemosh with human victims. At the Saiva temple at Tanjore in India, a male child was sacrificed very Friday evening at a shrine of Kali until two hundred years ago. The ancient Romans are said to have put corn-thieves to death as a sacrifice to Ceres. In Israel and Judah, at times, those "dedicated" to Yahweh by a solemn vow were put to death.[5]

In comparison with these bloody gods, many deities worshipped by people in many pantheons seem quite tame and harmless. They are important gods. You could gibe at them as well as worship them:

For the carved images of the nations are a shame,
> they are nothing but timber cut from the forest
> worked with his chisel by a craftsman.
> he adorns it with silver and gold,

fastening them on with hammer and nails
> so that they do not fall apart.

They can no more speak than a scarecrow in a plot of cucumbers.
> they must be carried, for they cannot walk.
> Do not be afraid of them: they can do no harm,
> and they have no power to do good (Jer. 10:3-5)

For all we know, Jeremiah got away unharmed with such disrespect he showed forwards gods and idols. But he was not so lucky with the god called national security. He was branded as a traitor and nearly paid with his live for advocating surrender to the invading Babylonian armies as the only way to national salvation.

Many of the gods and idols Jeremiah ridiculed have disappeared. But this savage god – national security – not only has not disappeared but has increased in its savagery. In the name of national security political opposition is getting away free. The taboo surrounding this idol is hard to break by democratic movements. Democratic movements – movements of the people –are most offensive to the cult of national security. They upset internal stability and court the danger of invasion by external enemies. That is why we have seen this god of national security raging in great fury in many Asian capitals in recent years. Charges are fabricated against political dissidents. False confessions are extracted from human- rights fighters with torture. The military court is then duly summoned to pronounce

the predetermined verdict on the victims. These martial law court trials are ritual murders committed on the altar of national security, the supreme god.

Such ritual murders dedicated to the cult of national security have obscured ideological boundaries among Asian nations. If they can take place in a capitalist capital, they also may take place in a socialist capital. If they are staged in a "free and democratic" nation, they are also performed in an "unfree and autocratic" nation. A strange convergence has occurred in Asia today – a convergence of ideologically antagonistic regimes in from of the altar to the deity whose name is national security. Pretexts may be different – commitment to historical materialism, recovery of lost territory, reunification of a divided nation… But it all comes down to one and the same thing: absolute dedication to national security.

But people are not deceived. Even our folk storyteller in ancient China was not duped. In reality, it is the question of power. The emperor who was able to carry out the murder of ten thousand lives to build a defense wall must have been powerful emperor. The ruling political party which is able to mobilize police, military and judicial forces to arrest, try and imprison opposition politicians must be a formidable party. Idolatry of national security is the idolatry of power. Among the African peoples it has been observed that "the more powerful the nation, the grander the (human) sacrifice."[6] The immensity of human sacrifice becomes the measure of power held by the ruler. That is how a repressive regime controls people's minds with force. It responds to the voice of opposition with

intimidation. And it reacts to open protest with military power. Here the true nature of the cult of national security is uncovered. The cult secures not the security of the nation but the security of the ruling party. The cult enhances not the security of the people but the security of the autocratic ruler. Our folktale has the genius to say: "The Emperor regarded his subjects as so much grass and weeds. "People are disposable as grass, while the ruler is not. The security of people is dispensable as weeds, whereas the security of the power holder is not. This cult of power is more frightening than the cult of Moloch or Chemosh. It can reduce human beings into mere grass and weeds.

This savage god of national security and power is a greedy god. Insatiable greediness is another horrible characteristic of god. It devoured one million human beings in the construction of the Great Wall. The frightful fact is that the more devours, the greedier it becomes. It demands more and more human sacrifice. It lusts after more and more human flesh. It thirsts for more and more human blood. This greedy god in our world and in our time manifests itself, among others, as the god of the frantic arms race. The race for armaments is a race for national security, so people are told. But it contributes, in fact, to the expansion of power in the hands of the already powerful rulers. The result, as affirmed by the Vatican, is "the obvious contradiction between the waste involved in the over-production of military devices and the extent of unsatisfied vital needs. The contradiction

> is in itself an act of aggression against those who are the victims of it. It is an act of aggression which amounts to a

crime, for even when armaments are not used, by their cost alone, they kill the poor by causing them to starve.[7]

It is no longer a matter of one million lives here. It is a matter of one billion lives, and even more. A policy made ostensibly to enhance national security, even if it may cost one billion lives, is considered moral. A strategy designed to promote national defense, even if it devours more than one third of the gross national project, which is the case in most Third World countries, is deemed justifiable.

The Soviet Union has long succumbed to the tyranny of this insatiable god. No outsider to the Soviet state secrets can know how many rubles she burns on the altar of this god. But the sad fact is that even the United States, a nation that abhors idolatry, increasingly submits herself to the perverse charm of this god of destruction. Her present administration has proposed to cut by one third her 8-million-dollar foreign aid programme, which represents less than a third of one percent of the 2.6 trillion U.S. gross national product. In the midst of hue and cry for mercilessly axing the budgets, military spending not only escapes the cuts but will get a substantial increase. In his first address to Congress on February 18, 1981, President Reagan said that his administration plans to ask Congress for an extra $1.3 billion for military spending in the current fiscal year of 1981, $7.2 billion extra in 1982, $20.7 billion in 1983, $27 billion in 1984. In 1985 there will be additional asking of $50.2 billion and in 1986, 63.1 billion![8] Who can comprehend such staggering figures? On top of all this, human rights will no longer be a high priority in American foreign policy. In dismay we cannot help

asking: who is going to suffer and die because of all this? The answer is clear. This says an editorial, "would be a sharp, indiscriminate blow to the world's poor"[9] and to those who struggle for basic human rights of freedom, justice and democracy in the Third World. Under the reign of this greedy god, the poor and the oppressed have little hope of "raising their heads above the sky" *(ch'ut t'au t'n)*, as people in Taiwan say.

The Power of People's Tears

This powerful, savage and greedy god worshipped by emperors, presidents and generals! This idolatry of power before which people tremble in fear! What kind of political theology would be a match for it? What sort of power ethic would be powerful enough for it? Many of us ask such questions in Asia: those of us who have seen and experienced the tragedy of the Kwangju uprising in Korea in May 1980, the suppression of the Human Rights Day Rally in Taiwan in October 1979, the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus – the right of prisoners to challenge their detention – under martial law rule in the Philippines, the military presence at every level of government and big business in Indonesia... Buddhists, too, asked these question through self-immolation at the height of the Vietnam War. The writers who contributed to the erection of the Democracy Wall in Peking *a*lso searched for answers to these basic questions. These are people's questions – Buddhists or Christians, Hindus or Muslims, believers or non-believers. This is the quest for people's political theology versus rulers' political theology. This is the birth pang of people's power ethic to overcome dictators' power ethic. To put it in the language of

Christian faith, we are engaged in the search for the political theology and power ethic of living in Christ with people.

As far as Lady Meng is concerned, she knows what she should do. Her husband was taken and buried in the Great Wall. The Wall has been completed, but her duty towards her murdered husband has not yet been completed. She must bring back his bones and bury them where he belongs – his ancestral home. It was a long and dangerous journey shad had to make from her home to the Great Wall. Finally, she reached the Wall – the Wall that took her husband's life, broke her family and deprived her of the joy and hope that the union of husband and wife alone could give. But at once she realized that she was confronted with a humanly impossible task. The Wall stared at her with cold arrogance. The powerful Wall showed no emotions. It was built to drive away the strong nomads. How could it but look down on her with contempt, a mere, frail human being? She was faced with a brutal and hateful monster which had a passion for power but not for love, and whose virtue consisted in absolute indifference to human misery. Completely beaten and exhausted, "she sat down and wept".

We can almost see with our mind's eye the solitary figure of Lady Meng in the deserted wilderness, with tears running down her pale cheeks. We are no strangers to such tears. We have seen tears of despair in mothers and fathers, in brothers and sisters, and in wives and husbands, when their loved ones were roused from sleep at night, seized at their work, taken away, held incommunicado for weeks and months, and sentenced to long prison terms. Their crime speaking out for

human rights and democracy. Here is a prayer a Korean mother said at a prayer meeting when her two sons were arrested:

Oh God, since our bellowed sons have been in prison, spring has passed, and summer has changed into chilly fall, and in a few days we will be celebrating *Ch'usok* (Harvest Moon Festival). We cannot keel back our tears. Since there is no way to still the sorrow of our hearts, at times we have wandered around on a lonely mountaintop crying aloud to you. And we have spent night-long prayer vigils putting our plea before you with tears.[10]

Are these not the tears of Lady Meng? Are these not your tears? Are these not also God's tears? People are moved to tears; God is also moved to tears. But the Wall is not moved. It has no tears. Nor is the ruling power moved. It has no tears.

People can run out of tears. They are not tear-less like the Great Wall, like those who wield autocratic power. They are, in fact, tearful. They are filled with tears. They feel, they love, they argue, they quarrel, and they weep. But the time may come when their tears run dry, their passion is extinguished, their love destroyed, and their zeal to live vanishes. That is the end of time, end of life-an apocalyptic time! Such a time has come to many people. A Vietnamese poet dedicated a poem to such an apocalyptic time of tear-less-ness as the war around him raged on and on mercilessly:

I hammer the pain of separateness
into a statue to stand in the park,
Below it I crave a horizontal inscription

that reads: Soul of the Twentieth Century.

My statue spills no tears
for it has none left to spend.
My statue tells no stories
for what's the use of telling stories?

My statue: the soul of the century
with no halos above its head
My statue: the soul of the century
with no phoenixes beneath its feet.

My statue in fact is bare, naked,
no banner in its hand.
My statue casts its shadows aimless, everywhere, with
stone eyes fixed on Nothing.[11]

Is this just a poetic fantasy? It cannot be, for you and I have seen those faces of children, men and women, strangely expressionless, hollow eyes staring into the void, and mouths without strength to complain or appeal. We have had a foretaste of an apocalyptic time of tear-less-ness in Africa, in Latin America and here in our Asia.

O God, save us from turning into statues of tear-less-ness! This must be our prayer. People have no weapons except the weapons of tears. People have no power but the power of tears. We must save our tears and have them in plenty. We must have enough tears for public prayer meetings where we can pray in tears for political prisoners. There will be many occasions in which we shall be called upon to mourn with a lot

of tears for injustice done to helpless people. In many of the societies from which we have come, it is time for public morning. True, man of our repressive regimes want us to believe that this is a time for public festivity. Don't you see that our gross national product is up by 10% in comparison with five years ago? they tell us. Don't you realize that our per capita income has risen this year to US$ 1,000 from US$950 last year? They point us to government statistics. So they do not like our tears. They are annoyed at our tearful prayer meetings. But as long as there are political prisoners in our nation, every day is a day of public mourning.   As long as prisoners of conscience are held in isolated camps, no day should pass without our tears.

Our Jesus is a man of tears. He must have wept a lot. When he heard that Lazarus had died and moved to a tomb, he wept (John 11:35). It is human to weep. And if we believe that Jesus is God incarnate, then it is also divine to weep. Those who saw Jesus weep for Lazarus said: "How dearly he must have loved him!" (John 11:36). Tears mean capacity for love. Those who have no capacity for love have no tears. It is only when you love deeply, only if you love dearly, that you can weep. A stone has no capacity for love: it cannot weep. An autocratic power has no tears: it has no capacity for love. To maintain its power, it orders ten thousand lives to be extinguished without even batting an eyelid. Tears are signs of humanity and divinity. Through our tears we may still keep this world human and divine.

Jesus must have had such thoughts in his mind when he argued heatedly with the religious authorities of his day. "Alas for you, lawyers and Pharisees, hypocrites'!" He was heard

saying this over and over. He also boldly challenged the political authorities of the Roman colonialist. When Pilate the Roman governor tried to intimidate him with the formidable Roman authority, Jesus replied calmly: "You would have no authority at all over me if it had not been granted you from above" (John 19:11). Deep in his heart, Jesus must have been weeping. We are told that this same Jesus lamented over Jerusalem and said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that murders the prophets and stones the messengers sent to her! How often have a longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under wings; but you would not let me" (Mathew 23:37; par. Luke 13:34). Jesus must have been in tears when these words burst from his lips. These are "words of lungs and intestines" *(Fei-fu chi yen)* as one would put it in Chinese. These are sincere words – words that have come from the heart, soul and body. The language we have here is the hear-language, soul-language, and body-language. It is the language on which you have staked your all. It is the language which embodies Jesus' capacity of love for Lazarus, for friends, for his followers and believers. In this language of "lungs and intestines", Jesus has also shown his capacity of love even for enemies and oppressors.

There was a towering figure who was capable of coming close to Jesus' language of 'lungs and intestines'. It was Gautama the Buddha. This is what was said about him:

> Because he saw them (Humankind) living in an evil time, subjected to tyrannous kings and sufferings many ills, yet heedlessly following after pleasure.
>
> For this he was moved to pity.
> Because he saw them living in a time of wars, killing and

wounding one another: and knew that for the riotous hatred that has flourished in their hearts they were doomed to an endless retribution.

For this he was move to pity.

"For this the Buddha was moved to pity." Pity is a deceptive word. It can be a misleading expression. It is perhaps more correct to say: "For this the Buddha was moved to tears". Why not? I am sure none of us has seen a Buddha face in painting or in sculpture with a trace of tears on it. Tears do not seem to fit our image of the Buddha, He seems the personification of calmness itself. Seated in lotus fashion, he is a model of oriental quietness. Nothing seems to disturb him. With his eyes half-closed, his ears closed to all worldly noises, he raises his hand ever ready to teach other-worldly secrets of the Nirvana. But it is this very Buddha who is capable of being moved to tears. It is time we Christians gained an ability to look into the heart of the Buddha readily moved to tears in this turbulent sea of tyranny and war.

Jesus is moved to tears. The Buddha is move to tears. What does this say? It says that people are moved to tears. It also says that God is moved to tears. Here we grasp a vital meaning in our political theology. Here we have the possibility of a power ethic. Our political theology is not a theocratic interpretation of structures of government as ordained by God. Both Luther and Calvin overplayed this kind of political theology, claiming St. Paul as their mentor. Most western political theology has inherited this "orthodox" Reformation theology. As to our power ethic, it is not an ethic of power that gives approval

to violence in theory and execution of revolution. Some Latin American political theology of liberation tempts us in this direction with its acceptance of Marxist analysis of class struggle as a scientific explanation of world history.

The source of our political theology in Asia is the people – the people humiliated, oppressed and impoverished. And the power of our political ethic comes from people's tears – tears people shed because of their misery and the misery of others. People capable of crying, people capable of being moved to weep – this is the source and power of our political theology. After all, did not Jesus weep for Jerusalem? Was he not moved to tears by the sick and by the outcasts? That is why we cannot think of the world without Jesus. In a much similar way we can also ask: After all, was not the Buddha moved to tears at the sight of "living multitudes" *(chung-sheng)* in misery and suffering? That is why we cannot think of Asia without the Buddha.

We have no illusions. We know politics is power. We have learnt out bitter lessons –in Korea, in Taiwan, in the Philippines, in Thailand, and even here in India, the largest democracy in the world in terms of population. Power-politicians speak the language of power. They know no other language. They make people breathe it and ear it. They know people cannot and will do digest it. But no matter. The language of power must be the language of the land. Martial law or not, power-politicians see to it that people get the message in the language of power.

What then is the language of people's political theology? What must then be the semantic of people's power ethic? It is the language and the sematic created by people's tears. Language of tears versus language of power! Power of tears against power of guns! The outcome of the contest seems decided from the very beginning. The battle seems lost even before it begins.

But lady Meng in our folktale tells us an amazing story. "Her weeping so affected the wall," we are told, "that it collapsed and laid bare her husband's bones!" Truly astonishing, the power of Lady Meng's tears! She must have wept her heart out. Her wailing must have moved the firmament of heaven and shaken the foundation of the earth. Her crying must have stirred all "living souls" *(sheng-ling)* to rally behind her. And an incredible thing happened. The Wall, that invincible Wall, the Wall that embodied brutal power and naked authority, collapsed and yielded her husband's bones!

Who says tears have no power? Who declares only the weak shed tears? The tears that well out of the heart of love can cause the Great Wall to fall. Wan Sang Han, a Korean Christian layperson active in struggles for human rights and democracy, says this in his meditation "In our Weakness is our Strength".

We are weak. We are daily conscious of our weakness before the Leviathan of political power..... However, our weakness and our powerlessness paradoxically operate as the basis of our strength. The powerful are keenly aware of our powerlessness and weakness, and at the same time afraid of it. Many of the

policemen who follow us daily have confessed that they respect Christian conscientious objectors for their courage and weakness, even though they are constantly harassing us. It is indeed true that genuine courage comes from the weak.[13]

These words of Wan Sang Han are full of contradictions. He confess that he and is comrades are weak and yet they are strong. This is a true confession. On the other hand, there are police agents, those who enforce martial law and order, who through tremendously powerful, confess that they are afraid. This also is a true confession. What are we to make of such contradictions? Is this just a typical habit of self-debasement? Is this a common-place trick we Asians are good at in our social conduct? When a host spreads before the astonished eyes the guests a sumptuous twelve course dinner, he or she says with barely concealed pride. "I am sorry there is not much to eat. But please help yourself!"

Christians and others involved in human rights efforts have no time for the luxury of such a verbal trick. And functionaries of government security departments are in no need of such hospitality acrobatics. What takes place is a straight confrontation of weakness with strength, powerlessness with power. It is an unequal contest between the weak and the strong. But in the thick of the battle, the weak realize that they are strong, while the strong confess that they are weak. Why? The strength of the weak is the strength of people's tears – tears that flow from the soul that longs for justice, from the heart that loves cares. Who can withstand such power? Even the powerful

Great Wall could not. How much less those secret service agents who keep close watch on victims of authoritarian power!

Love is stronger than might. People's tears are mightier than rulers' naked power. This is no sentimental platitude. Do you not remember the confession of the Roman soldier at the foot of Jesus' cross? That Roman soldier, completely armed from head to toe, is completely disarmed by Jesus on the cross armed with nothing but two pieces of wood standing for shame, wretchedness and death. What moved him to confess that Jesus is the Son of God? Jesus' powerful tears! His undefeatable love! The soldier must have heard him pray to God: "Father, forgive them!". "Father, forgive them!" This is the heart of Jesus' political theology. This is the secret of his power ethic.

Encounter with Truth

The Great Wall collapsed and Lady Meng retrieved her husband's bones. The struggle seems ended and her heart's desire won. We could wish her Godspeed as she sets out on her return journey with the precious memory of her husband. But an uneventful home-bound trek it was not going to be. A greater ordeal was still to come. The emperor had heard about her and wanted to see her. When she was brought to him, her beauty so struck him that he wanted to make her empress! Anger is the only fitting reaction to the emperor's outrageous design. Do you remember the prophet Nathan who became fiercely angry when King David had Uriah killed on the battlefield and took over Bathsheba. Uriah's wife, and made her queen? But besides anger, a deep theology on authoritarian power is hidden in this Chinese folktale. The folktale wants to tell us that autocratic

power is the power that rapes. It rapes people's conscience. It rapes people's beauty. It rapes people's virtue. This is the power behind the Great Wall. This is the power that proclaims marital law. This is the power that promulgates a new constitution in the name of sham democracy.

Lady Meng is brought face to face with this power that rapes. What could she do? What could people? Submission? Yes, people have submitted unwillingly to the power that oppresses them, impoverishes them and humiliates them. Rebellion? Yes, people have risked their lives and rebelled. The Chinese saying, rulers compel people to rebel, is an apt description both in a feudal society in the past and in an authoritarian nation today. In many instances, it is secret societies and religious groups which head rebellion Revolution? Yes, the history of each nation is a history of revolutions. One tyrannous dynasty is replaced by another tyrannous dynasty through revolution. In the modern history of Asian nations, revolution has often turned out military regimes and police states.

Lady Meng did not submit. Neither did she rebel. Nor did she wage a revolution. She turned the encounter with the power that rapes into an encounter with the truth. She had the emperor construct a terrace forty-nine feet high on the bank of the river in preparation for her husband's burial. The in full view of the emperor and all his officials present, "she climbed onto the terrace and began to curse the emperor in a loud voice for all his cruelty and wickedness."

This is the moment of encounter with truth. The emperor must have shaken all over in fury. His officials must have trembled with fear. Everybody says the emperor is virtuous and wise. Court officials say so. People so acclaim him. Inscriptions on numerous stone monuments erected on sacred mountains so proclaim. One of these stone monuments reads:

The sage emperor who has pacified all under heaven is tireless in his rule;
He rises early, goes to sleep late, makes lasting benefits and offers wise instructions;
Wide spread his teachings, all far and near is well ordered according to his will...[14]

These words sound so familiar, don't they? They might have come straight out of many government controlled newspapers in many countries in today's Asia.

All praise to presidents and party chairmen! Another stone monument sums it all up in these words:
His (the emperor's) achievements surpass those of the Five Emperors.
His kindness reaches even the beasts of the field;
All creatures benefit from his virtue,
All live in peace at home.[15]

Paradise has come true under no less than the despotic Shih Huang Ti!

All this is absolute lie of course. In an autocratic state, people are prisoners of white lies. Rulers themselves also

imprison themselves in fantastic lies. Lies are part of power-politics.

But on that terrace on the river bank, Lady Meng ceases to be a prisoner of lies. She is in full command of truth now. In the entire hearing of those manufacturers of lies, she lets the truth out, "You, the emperor, are wicked and brutal!" she shouted. For the first time the emperor and his officials encounter truth. At that moment Lady Meng commands the empire of truth and defeats the empire of lies.

People have the truth. This is an audacious thing to say, I know. It can be a dangerous assertion to make. We must not make such truth-claim about everything; otherwise we, each one of us, become little dictators dictating truth itself and dictating others to think, know and believe as we do. That is where religious intolerance comes in. That is when obscurantism prevails. People can err, of course. As a matter of fact, they have often erred. We remember the story of the golden calf in the Old Testament. In the absence of Moses, they talked Aaron, the acting leader, into "making gods to go ahead of them" (Exodus 32). People can be manipulated to serve particular interests of certain power groups. This is the case with the crowds who welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem shouting hosannas but demanded his death shortly afterwards. Also still fresh in our memory are the millions of Red Guards running the length and breadth of China with the little red book in their hands at the behest of their charismatic leader. No, we must not create an idolatry of people. People are no gods. We must remember this is in our theology of people.

There are situations, however, in which people have the truth.......situations in which people are oppressed, condemned to poverty and deprived of freedom of conscience. When Lady Meng, whose husband was murdered for the building of the Wall, says the emperor is cruel and wicked, the emperor must be cruel and wicked. When Australian aborigines lament that "until our land rights are recognized, we cannot be free and equal citizens with white Australians"[16], whit Australians must be treating them as unfree and unequal citizens. When the majority of the people in Taiwan protest that they have no political rights of self-determination, the ruling regime must be depriving them of their political rights of self-determination. Or, if the poor in the slums and shanties of the big cities of Asia complain that they suffer exploitation from big industries and giant multinational corporations, these industries and multinational corporations must be exploiting the, In this sense, people have the truth; their truth must be told and heard.

Encounter with truth is the heart of our political theology. Politics of love does not have to lead to politics of vengeance and politics of violence. But it must lead to the politics of truth. Prophets in the Old Testament played the politics of truth to the hilt. It was the only politics they knew. To Shalum, king of Judah, the prophet Jeremiah declared:

But you have no eyes, no thought for anything but gain, set only on the innocent blood you can shed, on cruel acts of tyranny (Jeremiah 22:17).

The king has no eyes. He is blinded by lies. He must be brought face to face with truth- the truth of the people who suffer under his tyranny.

In Jesus, the politics of truth becomes an ultimate politics. "I am the truth." he has said (John 14:6). Jesus is the truth that the Sabbath is made for people and not people for the Sabbath. He is the truth that the poor who suffer now will fare better in the reign of God than the rich who are insensitive to the misery of the poor. He is the truth that the hungry have the human right to rice and the well-fed have the human duty to share their abundant rice. He is also the truth that the oppressed people are entitled to the day when they can "raise their heads above the sky", while oppressors have moral obligation to yield their power to the people through unrigged election.

I do not think that Jesus was idolizing poverty in the place of wealth, or commending the hungry at the expense of the well-fed. Nor do I believe that he was encouraging sighing and weeping, ridiculing merry-making and rejoicing. Jesus did not indulge in "sour-grape" theology. He was a poor carpenter, to begin with. That was true. But he was almost crowned as king. Power and wealth were within his reach. These were his for the asking. In this regard, the story of the temptation shows a most human side of Jesus. Power, glory and riches! When would not be tempted by them? Not even Jesus! But he rejected them. Why? In Jesus' ultimate political ethics, truth cannot avoid conflict with ruling power. How true this is with an authoritarian regime! But it can also be true with a democratic government. In Jesus' ultimate power ethic, truth is a difficult companion of

wealth. How true this is in a capitalist society! But it can also be true in a socialist society Jesus' politics is truth-politics; his power ethic is love ethic. And it is on the basis of his truth politics and love ethic that Jesus wants us to re-adjust radically our concept of justice and design our strategy for it.

We may at once recall Jesus' parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Mathew 20: 1-5). Labourers in the parable were hired at five different times in the same day – early morning, midday, mid-afternoon, and an hour before sunset. When the day ended and payment was made, the labourers discovered that they all received the same wage, from those who labourered ten hours to those who worked only one hour. Obviously, this was a grave injustice. But Jesus saw it differently. Jesus' view, consists in everyone each day having enough to live on. We can be sure that in his parable the wage represented this adequate sum. This is the truth involved in the landowner's wage politics. But there was something more. The wage was given with love and should be accepted with love. The laboueres who complained bitterly could not, of course, understand this. They did not realize that justice blind to the need of others and divorced from love for others is no justice at all. It is tyranny. It is inhumanity. This is jungle politics and jungle ethics.....survival of the fittest. But the heart of Jesus' political theology and his power ethic is just the opposite .... Survival of the unfittest. That is why his God has a determined bias for the prodigal son. That is why Jesus sides with prostitutes, tax-collectors and the poor. He seeks out a particular kind of people – the unfittest people, re-instates them in society and gives them a prominent place in the reign of God. You may call Jesus' vision of such an

eschatological human community that of "from one according to one's ability, to one according to one's needs". So be it! The fundamental driving force behind Jesus' vision of such an eschatological human community is truth and love, and not lie and violence.

Many people in Asia, Christians and others, are becoming more and more engaged in the mission of encounter with truth in the service of the vision of a human community in which the unfittest become the fittest. Truth must be spoken out loud. We want to saturate ruling powers with the truth of suffering people. We want to inundate those in high places of authority with the true state of the people in despair. senator Jovito R. Salonga, for example tells us what it is really like in the Philippines.

> 70% of the population are malnourished;
> 85% of school children suffer from protein-calorie malnutrition;
> 70% of Manila residents today are poor, and
> 40% are very poor.[17]

This is the people statistics. And there are ample reasons to believe that this people statistics is much more true than governments statistics. In each and every nation Christians and others must let such people statistics shout and cry in the ears of the authorities until they cannot stand it.

In the 1980 Christian issue of *Taiwan Church News* appeared a short article. "Let's Talk Again: The President too is a Human Being".

> ...... President too is a human being, thus his words are not sacred oracle. His instruction is not heavenly truths

which people must obey. Presidents not an emperor. In a democratic society the President is the people's public servant. The difference between a public servant and an emperor is like the difference between haven and abyss.... President too is a human being. We should respect him, but not worship him. We should accept him with reason, and not praise him blindly. [18]

This is people's logic. It should be the political logic in a nation that professes to be free and democratic. But in self-styled democratic countries in Asia, presidents have their own political logic: it is for them to dictate and rule, and it is for people to listen and obey. This kind of self-styled democracy will not do.

It must be said loud and clear that presidents' logic is false and that people's logic is true. We must, with people's logic, argue and reason until the rulers cannot ignore it.

This kind of people's statistics and people's logic begin to appear in abundance in Asia.   It does not have national or ideological boundaries.   Let me quote a Peking underground poem called *Today*.
What did Cain come to the world for?
- to turn light into darkness,
- to turn joy into pain,
- to turn love into tragedy.
O Poet, please strip away his mask,
Then,
All pain and groaning's
like drops of water will gather together

raising giant waves that level the mountains and empty the sea.

Each and every obscure thought will become crystallized like atomic energy releasing enormous power to destroy everything.

At that time, people
will no longer be a powerless hand
forced to raise in unconditional acceptance
of the dictator's order......[19]

This is people's song. How authentic it sounds! Party leaders' songs, in contrast, are political rhetoric without human authenticity. Such underground people's song must be sung, and sung until it becomes and above-the-ground song. To that day the unknown poet in Peking must have dedicated this poem and this song.

A Grand Finale

It is passionate political theology we have in the folktale. "The Faithful Lady Meng". It has taken us to an encounter with truth before the emperor and his court. But encounter with truth is not the end of the story. By an almost inevitable inner dynamic of its own, encounter with truth develops into encounter with death and resurrection. The drama we see here is as sublime as tragic, as Christian as Asian.

Encounter with truth is an encounter with death. "The truth will set you free," says Jesus. This is true. But, the enemy of the truth will not set you free. This is also true. Lady Meng must have known that. She must have known that. She climbed

the steps of the terrace with truth on her lips and with death before her. After shouting the truth into the emperor's ears on the terrace, she jumped into the river and embraced death.

The shadow of death is never far from truth. This is a sobering thought. Torture chambers are there to process truth into false confession. Trial is staged to turn truth into lie. Prison is built to keep truth out of the reach of the public. And death is carried out to silence the truth. Authoritarian power has this formidable weapon to deal with truth – death. We have seen this in Lady Meng. We witness this today as Christians and others in Asia and elsewhere are subjected torture, trial, imprisonment and even death for siding with truth.

There is nothing strange in this for Christians. The trial scene of Jesus before Pontius Pilate immediately comes to our mind. To Pilate, bearer of Roman power and authority, Jesus said: "My task is to bear witness to the truth. For this was I born: for this I came into the world, and all who are not deaf to truth listen to my voice" (John 18: 37-38). Truth is a big word and an important word even for Pilate. He heard it and snapped back: "What is truth?" He could not understand the truth that is Jesus. He could not see Jesus as the truth. The truth he understood is the truth of Roman power. He actually threatened Jesus with it. "I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you" (John:19:10), he reminded Jesus. He did carry out his death threat and let Jesus the truth be crucified on the cross. But, as we all know, a tremendous power is released from the cross to defeat the power of death with the power of resurrection.

The power of life released from the cross must be the power that inspires our political theology and creates our political ethics. Most surprisingly, our folktale is no alien to this power of life. When Lady Meng jumped to her death from the terrace, the emperor "flew into a rage an ordered his soldiers to cut up her body into little pieces and to grind her bones to power". This was an extreme form of revenge one could wreak on one's enemy in ancient China. The idea was perhaps to erase every trace of one's hated enemy from the face of the earth. But see how our folk story-teller transformed this revenge with its horrible death into the power of life that lives forever! As the emperor's soldiers "did this", so the folktale brings us to its grand finale, "the little pieces (of Lady Meng's body) changed into little silver fish, in which the soul of the faithful Meng Chiang lives forever". Here we touch the theological genius of our folktale. For do we not hear in a distinct echo of what Jesus said to his disciples: :.....a grain of wheat remains a solitary grain unless it falls into the ground and dies, but if it dies, it bears a rich harvest" (John 12:24)?

The history of a nation does not consist mainly of emperors, kings or presidents. Nor is history primarily the history of revolutionary heroes. What makes history are the people in whom the soul of Lady Meng lives – people humiliated and exploited but awakened to challenge the power of death with the power of resurrection. People make history worth experimenting and worth living. There is no failure in history created by people. People's history never fails. What we read and see is the failure of the history of kings, emperors and dictators. But the people bear their history in pain. They carry it

forward in suffering, and they create it in anticipation of its fulfilment. Is this not the history of the Cross?

It is into this movement of people's history that we as Christians in Asia have become incorporated. We are not writing a "Christian" history of Asia. As long as we are intent on such a history, it becomes a missionary history, a history of confessions and denominations. But as we begin to write history with our fellow Asians, it turns out, to our surprise, to be history of the cross and resurrection in Asia. The space created by the power of the cross and resurrection expands and expands through little silver fish in which the soul of Lady Meng lives. Our political theology is located in the spaces created by the spiritual power of Asian people in suffering. And our power ethic is the ethic that believes in the ultimate victory of God who lives with people and gives them the power of truth, love and justice. If this is God's politics, it should be ours also.

NOTES

1. See Folktales of China, edited by Wolfram Eberhard (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 24-26.

2. See Kenneth Latourette, The Chines, their History and Culture (New York: The Macmilan Company, 1959), p. 613.

3. Peter L. Berger, Pyramids of Sacrifice, Political Ethics and Social Change (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 137.

4. Herb Feith, "Repressive-Developmentalist Regimes in Asia Old Struggles, New Vulnerabilities," in Escape from Domination (Tokyo: International Affairs – Christian Conference of Aisa, 1979, pp.49.73), p. 58.

5. See "Human Sacrifice" in Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), vol. VI. pp. 840-867.

6. ibid., p. 840b.

7. Quoted in J.A. Viera Gallo, "Arms Race in the Third World", in the Security Trap, a Concern for Christians, ed. Jose-Antonio Viera Gallo (Rome: IDOC International, 1979, pp. 50-59), p. 51.

8. See International Herald Tribune, February 20,1981,p.1.

9. "U.S. Foreign Aid", an editorial in International Herald Tribune, January 30, 1981.
10. From "A Mother's Prayer", in Documents on the Struggle for Democracy in Korea, ed. The Emergency Christian Conference on Korean Problems (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha,1975), p. 205.

11. Tru Vu, "The Statue of the Century", in A Thousand Years of Vietnamese Poetry, trans. Nguyen Bich with Burton Raffel and W.S. Merwin (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), p. 179.

12.   See The Wisdom of Buddhism, ed. Christmas Humphreys (London: Curzon Press Ltd., 1979), p.37.

13.   In Varieties of Witness, ed. D. Preman Niles & T.K. Thomas (Singapore: Christian Conference of Asia, 1980), p. 129.

14.See Szuma Chien, Records of the Historian, trans. Yang Hsien-yi & Gladys Yang (Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1974), p. 169.

15. Ibid., p. 172. These legendary emperors in pre-historic China are, by one account, Huang Ti (Yellow Emperor), Chuan Hsiu, K'u, Yao, and Shun. They are revered as sage rulers.

16. *See No Place in the Inn, Voices of Minority People in Asia (Urban Rural Mission Christian Conference of Asia, 1979), p. 15.*

17. *See Salonga, "Seven Years of Martial Law in the Philippines, an Evaluation," in Escape from Domination, op. cit., (pp. 75-85), p. 76.*

18. *Taiwan Church News (Kau-Hoe Kong-Po), December 21 & 28, 1980, p. 7, translation mine.*

19. *From Peking Spring, a collection of poems and essays by Wei Ching- sheng & others (Peking: P'ing Ming Publishing House, 1980), pp. 352-3. Translation mine*

Decolonisation, Religion, and Development

- Nye, M. (2019). Decolonizing the study of religion. Open Library of Humanities, 5(1). https://olh.openlibhums.org/article/id/4580/.

Sinhala

Tamil

Colonialism and decolonization

On a broad level, decolonization is about change: it is about responding to changes that are taking place well beyond the classroom — and also about changes that *should be* taking place. Decolonization is about changing how people think, talk, and act through a radical engagement with a plurality of voices and perspectives that have been historically marginalized and silenced. Thus, decolonization is not the same as diversifying (Bhanot and Shukla, 2015; Prescod-Weinstein, 2018). The aim for diversity is to accommodate ('making space' for) 'alternatives' and differences within an existing scheme which largely remains unchanged. Decolonization is not about 'finding space' at the table: it is about changing the room.

Decolonization is about remembering and recognizing the histories of European colonialism and racism that have structured the contemporary world — in particular, the academy. It is about challenging the structural levels of racialization that frame not only who and how we teach.[4] And so, decolonization is a political and academic movement with resonances across much of academia. There have been calls for

and explorations of decolonization in a number of academic fields.[5] Decolonization is not simply a theory or a vague ideal for change.

Decolonization requires scholars to recognize their own structural location within the disciplinary history and the institutions where they teach and research. As a white male scholar, I have emerged from many of the discourses and political practices of whiteness that need to be critically acknowledged and challenged in this process of decolonization. In the Scottish universities where I have recently been teaching, the student body is predominantly racialized as white, and so attempting to understand the legacies of colonialism and white identity is akin to trying to teach a goldfish about water (Morrison, 1992). It is there: around everything, but rarely noticed. Living within such whiteness is having the privilege of not having to experience the low key and/or life-threatening forces of structural racism that are premised on the exclusion of people of colour from the centres of power and academic life, or at least to prevent those who are racialized as not white from being allowed in too far.

Thus, decolonization is in itself a threat to such political structures; it is a challenge to dominant forms of hegemony – within European and North American societies and within particular universities. I write this from the perspective that the challenges are for all involved in the process, not only for those racialized as people of colour. I wish to participate in these processes of change from my position of being 'within' (as well as outside) those structures of power. For me, there is no neutral ground as a scholar: I see my scholarship and teaching as largely about encouraging others (particularly those who are racialized

similarly to me) to think about issues of race and gender, rather than the usual processes of obfuscation of these core issues. In doing so, however, my aim is also to engage with, learn from, and amplify those who are racialized as people of colour and hence to centralize and mainstream theories, approaches, and methodologies that are largely marginalized within the contemporary study of religion.

From a historical perspective, decolonization is an old term, which references the process at the end of European colonialism[6] around the mid-20th century — when countries that had been subjected to British, French, Dutch, and other colonial rule became independent (White, 2014; Davis, 2013; Duara, 2004; Smith and Jeppesen, 2017). Thus, we can talk of the decolonization of India, South Asia, South East Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and so on. Such immediate decolonization was often traumatic, such as the extreme violence deriving from British policies and mismanagement in colonial India that spilled out in 1947 in the first few months of independence based on Partition (Khan, 2007).

As important writers on decolonization from this time noted, such as Frantz Fanon (2004; Fanon, 2008; Hwami, 2016; Rabaka, 2009) and Albert Memmi (2003), although the process of political decolonization and independence may have removed the colonizers from the direct context, there was also a process of internal colonization of the ruling classes of the colonized. That is, colonization did not necessarily end with political independence. Furthermore, Aníbal Quijano (2007: 169) argued that colonization should be seen as a continuing process in the 21st century:

In the same way, in spite of the fact that political colonialism has been eliminated, the relationship between the European – also called 'Western' – culture, and the others, continues to be one of colonial domination, [...] a colonization of the other cultures, albeit in differing intensities and depths. This relationship consists, in the first place, of a colonization of the imagination of the dominated; that is, it acts in the interior of that imagination, in a sense, it is a part of it.

He goes on to say: Coloniality, then, is still the most general form of domination in the world today, once colonialism as an explicit political order was destroyed. It doesn't exhaust, obviously, the conditions nor the modes of exploitation and domination between peoples. But it hasn't ceased to be, for 500 years, their main framework (Quijano, 2007: 170).

Thus, decolonization was previously about challenging the European empires of the 20th century; it remains a challenge to the settler colonialism that created much of north America and Australia. In this sense, decolonization is about land issues: it is pragmatic and political, aiming to redress profound inequalities of history. It is about recognizing the many forms of cultural and political Indigeneity. As Tuck and Yang point out, *decolonization is not a metaphor*:

Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. The easy adoption of decolonizing discourse by educational advocacy and scholarship, evidenced by the increasing number of calls to 'decolonize our schools', or use 'decolonizing methods', or,

'decolonize student thinking', turns decolonization into a metaphor (2012: 1).

Such decolonization is a political program (Rizvi, 2017) that has the potential to challenge and largely transform many of the political, social, and legal assumptions of contemporary western society. At its most basic level it is a recognition that the injustices are not only historic — and that there is continuing violence caused by the legacies of colonialism.

Decolonization is about a *political agenda* that challenges power structures and global inequalities. It is also about a *decolonization of knowledge*.[7] That is, both before and after the processes of decolonization and independence, such power was exerted through the 'colonization of the imagination' and knowledge (Maldonado-Torres discusses this as the 'coloniality of being', 2004, 2007). Much of what I am addressing here is the latter — an attempt to explore the processes of decolonization of knowledge and education (which also includes the structures of the university and departmental/disciplinary units as well as the content of courses that are taught). But to explore such a decolonization of knowledge also requires an engagement in some form with the much larger and even more difficult political challenges of decolonization. And so, although formal decolonization of empires and independent nations happened over fifty years ago, and the study of religion is no longer overtly a branch of colonial rule, there remain questions about what that legacy means and how this discipline can become more critically aware of its past and more rigorously able to define itself beyond the structures of power and exploitation which gave rise to it.

Decolonization is not simply about adding one or two alternative readings to a syllabus. Decolonization of the curriculum is a starting point, and the inevitable result of a much wider programme of change.[8] So, how can the study of religion (and a number of related academic fields of study) move further from its origins as a tool of European colonialism to being a space in which contemporary power structures of inequality (including race, gender, sexualities, class, and ability) are challenged and disrupted?

Some of the ways in which the discipline can begin to explore this are as follows: the historical development of the study of religion, such as its formation as a discipline; the historical processes by which assumptions and ideas (and terminology) were formed; the discipline's canon of theory and methodologies; and the way in which the discipline is written.

[Two Sides] Living in Christ with People

Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe
(Reproduced from CCA 1981 Assembly)

Sinhala   **Tamil**

Introduction

Let me begin with a word of thanks. I am grateful to the organizers of this Assembly for giving me the honour to deliver this Lecture. I am also profoundly thankful that it is being given in memory of a Sri Lankan who was primarily responsible under God for the birth and growth of the Christian Conference of Asia. People of my generation owe so much to his breadth of vision, profound biblical insight and dynamic leadership that he continues to be a living inspiration to me. So I would echo the words of the writer of the book of Ecclesiasticus and say:

> "So let us now give praise for godly men
> our ancestors of generations past...
> "Their reputations will be passed on to their descendants
> and this will be their inheritance."[1]

This is not a personal testimony and is meant to be a theological reflection on the theme of the Assembly. But such reflection cannot leave out the personal factor. However much one may share the life and experience of others, one's own life, experience and perception remains basic. The way people,

events and writings register within one's consciousness, the extent to which one absorbs suffering and joy, responds to or runs away from challenges and struggles, grasps or fails to grasp insights, learns and unlearns from experience, are all affected by one's class position, cultural environment, ecclesiastical inheritance, biblical perspective and personal temperament; and they shape one's inner perceptions: Such perception is a vital component in the kind of reflection which arises from encountering God in the context of contemporary life and history. Genuine theological reflection is meant to be part of a life response; is expected to alter life within through a deeper surrender to the living Lord, and life without through a deeper commitment to free people, society and nature from exploitation, domination and alienation. But in itself, it is a form of knowing and communicating the meaning of what one has perceived so far in one's life journey. In this instance the communication will be in the form of verbal symbols.

I will consider the theme in the following way. The aspect of 'living in Christ' I will evaluate in terms of the images or symbols in the bible which depict various aspects of the status and functions of Jesus Christ, both as a historical person and as a cosmic Presence. The aspect of 'with people' I will consider in three ways. First, 'people' in the sense of multitudes (ochlos) as opposed to the elite;[2] and more specifically, the least and the last, the marginalized and companionless, the poor and oppressed suffering unbearable burdens, the sick and handicapped, and the morally disreputable. Secondly, 'people' in the sense of the nations (ethnos) with religio-cultural traditions other than Judaeo-Chritian.[3] Thirdly, 'people' in the

sense of the community (laos) of the baptized disciples of Jesus Christ,[4]

The story of Markandeya: A parable of the history of the Asian Church

My procedure will be to relate in my own way a story or myth from one of the scared books of Hinduism called the Matsya Purana.[5] It is about the adventure of a mighty sage named Markandeya during the interval of the dissolution and re-creation of the universe. Vishnu as the gigantic 'Lord of Maya' sleeps and dreams reclining on the quiescent, fathomless waters of the boundless abyss, symbolising elemental or primordial chaos. Within the divine dreamer is the ideal vision of what the re-created universe should be. Markandeya wanders inside the body of Vishnu satisfied with the edifying sight of the cosmos wherein all the castes are properly devoted to their tasks, and the holy sequence of the four stages of life operating with full effect among men. But inadvertently the ancient saint falls out from the slightly open lips of the sleeping Vishnu and plunges headlong into the boundless and dreadful darkness of the acosmic waters. He is seized by fear and despair and confusion as to what is real. But as he began to become dimly aware of the form of the gignic sleeping shape recumbent upon the waters in which he was bewildered, he was swallowed up and was again in the familiar vision of the ordered system of the cosmos within the body of Vishnu. While wandering within, he once again slips from the gigantic sleeper's mouth and tumbles into the dark depths of the acosmic watery womb. But in this instance, from where he was, he was able to behold Vishnu in a series of archetypal symbols: first as the primordial cosmic man

(Narayana) reclining on the acosmic waters, symbolishing elemental chaos; then as a majestic cosmic gander, the sound of whose rhythmic breathing is the melody of the creation and dissolution of the universe: and finally as aluminous divine child at play, undismayed amidst the pitch darkness of the boundless waters.

This experience of immersion in the elemental waters of fear, chaos and potential disintegration, and the three visions of the Vishnu in different archetypal symbols seen by someone reared within the socio-economic and religio-cultural traditions of Hinduism, will be the frame work for my theological reflections on the theme 'Living in Christ with people' in the tree aspects I have previously mentioned.

The colonial and post-colonial era

Markandeya, the ancient sage within the body of Vishnu, graciously pleased with the ordered and edifying state of affairs within the cosmos, and which was congenial to his nature and style of life, is the symbol of the Christian church within the ordered life of the colonial system and era in Asia. It was a state of affairs which the Church found congenial to its self-understanding of its nature, mission and style of life. The first unexpected plunge into the elemental waters of fear and confusion and possible disintegration symbolizes the psychological and socio-cultural situation in the post-colonial situation, which altered the self-understanding of the established church in these area. The re-emergence of the dominant status of the majority religions in the socio-economic-political spheres, resulted in the loss of the privileges and the numerical 'adherents' enjoyed by the churches under the

colonial powers; the revival of the indigenous religions and the renaissance of the ancient cultures derived from them, led to the loss of morale and a sense of direction. Christians were no longer the agents of change in Asian societies. I am merely summarizing what is now common knowledge, and was a shared existential experience of those of my generation.

The re-entry of Markandeya into the vision of the ideal state or order of life in the cosmos was marked with one difference. He had within him the experience of immersion in the acosmic waters of chaos with its potential for destruction. His self-understanding of life in its totality is now ambivalent, because his experience of what is real, is a mixture of the overt vision of constructive harmony and the underlying fear of destructive chaos. When he slips back again into the acosmic waters, because of his past experience he is able to struggle with effort to keep afloat. He is then not summarily re-taken into the internally ordered body of Vishnu, but is given a vision of Vishnu in his anthromorphic manifestation as the 'Cosmic Man', recumbent upon the acosmic waters. The gigantic figure rests upon the waters partly afloat and partly submerged, symbolising the potentiality of the waters both for dynamic manifestation in the diversified structure of creation, and also for periodic destructive disorder within creation and the ultimate dissolution of the whole of the created cosmos. But what dominates his attention now and guides his struggled swimming in the acosmic waters, is the vision of the gigantic man glowing with wonderful luminosity. His ambivalent self-understanding of life remains but is now illumined and empowered by the dominant vision of what is *human,* both as a person and as humanity in its totality.

Contemporary situation

Markandeya's struggle to remain afloat symbolizes our contemporary societal situation as Christians and also as Asians. We have re-emerged in the ongoing post-colonial situation wherein either of two ideologies (and theologies which respectively legitimize them) provide us with a sense of direction for the socio-economic-political reconstruction of society. Each is also an overall programme for constructive harmony and normative order, within which specific projects are intended to be correlated. It is in this conflict between these ideologies with their overt or covert potentiality for destruction, disorder and chaos, that we live and move and have our being. These two programmes cum ideologies as you all know, are on the one hand welfare capitalism with its thrust for national development, stemming from the first world, and on the other hand Marxist socialism with its thrust for enabling the oppressed to restructure society for their liberation, stemming from the communist world. But both are now indigenized Asian realities.

When Markandeya fell back a second time into the acosmic waters, it was is previous experience of ambivalence that enabled him to struggle to keep afloat, until an encounter with the Divine Lord illuminated the distinctively human dimension and empowered him to struggle back towards the internal body of the cosmos, but with a subtly different existential perception. We need to do the same at the present time, as we face these conflicting ideologically programmed strategies, because in both the demonic manipulation or power corruption which destroys what is distinctively human is an underlying reality. This has been expressed vividly in a recent drama in Sri Lanka which gives contemporary expression to an

ancient story.[6] A crippled man wants to reach the top of the mountain in which there is a previous stone which grants all desires (the 'cintamani' of our ancient lore). He has neither the power to walk nor the ability to stand erect in order to see the way ahead to the top of the mountain. He represents human beings and human groups handicapped, frail, marginalized, dependent, and vulnerable to manipulative oppression. He wants possession of the gem to recover the fullness of his humanity. There are four others, outsiders who have come to the foot of the mountain, also desiring to reach the top, in order to possess the previous gem. Their common desire is to possess that power which will enable them to rule humanity. They each offer to place the cripple on their shoulders, singly or in coalition, so that he may see the way and guide them to the summit: they offer him all sorts of benefits and to care for him on the way; and they also quarrel among themselves. The represent the political parties and leaders whether conservative, reformist, old left or new left. To get to the top, the crippled masses with their experience and the politicians with their programmes, ideologies and strategies for using power, need each other. What the drama portrays so concretely and visually is that each of the outside helpers wants to make use of the cripple as a tool to get possession of the precious gem; and the cripple with is inbred shrewdness suspects the motivation of each and all. Therein lies the poignancy of our situation in the ambivalence we face between the use of power, and the cherishing of what is human.

But we must not respond to this ambivalence by refusing to make our options. As the charioteer Krishna the avatar of Vishnu in the Mahabharata, tells Prince Arjuna hesitating to begin

the battle, he must make his options and discharge his moral responsibility in the midst of the poignant ambivalence of engaging in war because of its destructive power, and especially of battling against his own blood-related cousins. Obedience or commitment in particular situations however ambivalent, finds its ultimate meaning in the Divine Lord within whose cosmic body all contradictions and paradoxes are finally resolved. It is this transcendental vision given by Krishna, that gave Arjuna power to act and to continue acting. Inspired and sustained by a given ultimate, he could act more realistically through the relativities and ambiguities of the penultimate. [7]

Three-fold image of Jesus

The option we Christians have to make in the conflict between the two ideologies in our situation has to be shaped by our Christian vision: Jesus as the friend of sinners and outcastes; as the prophetic contestant and martyr denouncing groups and overturning the structures which oppress and alienate people, so as to build a righteous human order; and as the self-sacrificing *satyagrahi* seeking to convert and reconcile his enemy by steadfastly resisting him with the spiritual power of vicarious suffering love. These three images of Jesus must be held in dialectical relation with each other and control our ideological option.

My own conviction is that the church must opt for ideology, programme and strategy covered by the term "indigenous Marxian socialism". This is because indigenous welfare capitalism has been shown incapable of preventing the concentration of profit, power and privilege in dominant groups whereby enhanced growth for some is at the expense of sharing

for all, whatever be the attempts to mitigate glaring disparities: and its thrust it's both to treat the masses as manipulate consumers and hired labour, and also to treat deprived groups as objects of patronage in the furtherance of national development, of national integration and of attracting and forging links with a pervasive affluent foreign presence. Whereas indigenous socialism, influenced by rather than dominated by marxism, provides a better opportunity for the vast majority of people in Asia, to possess personal dignity, to be treated justly, experience well-being and fulfilment both personally and in community. The people who face oppression and alienation in Asia are not only the economically poor suffering unbearable burdens, but also racial and ethnic minorities, women, unemployed youth, the disable, the disabled, the 'tourism-debased', dissenting groups deprived of civil rights: in short, all who are deprived of their just share by social structures and who are made either submissive or alienated by psychological pressures.[8a]

Socialism has to be influenced rather than dominated by Marxism, because analysis of social structures, cultural consciousness and human alienation based on the category of class however sophisticated, and programme-strategies run by Marxist cadres, alone cannot remove the distortions of racism, sexism, elitism, and authoritarianism. The oppression of ethnic minorities in communist countries such as Vietnam and Ethiopia, the struggle of trade unions to be freed from state domination in Poland, the emerging struggle for civil liberties in Russia and China, the revelations of recurring elitism and sexism in the party cadres who seek to mobilize the people in communist countries, the conflict for authoritarian domination

between Russia, China and Vietnam and sufficient examples. Marxist socialism has also to be indigenous because social analysis based on class and accompanying ideological perception and motivation, alone cannot assess the religious dimension in people for its own worth.[8b] Perceptive Marxist socialists have begun to see this in the face of resurgence of Christianity in Eastern Europe and the persistence of Buddhism and Islam in other communist regions, a Russian Marxist is quoted as saying[9].

> "Well, did Lenin say that Marxism, far from repudiating the past, should absorb and work on it as the only sure foundation of a proletarian culture ? Who can deny that deny that Buddhist – that its cultural and historical values have moulded the spiritual heritage of mankind...."

Priority to Jesus as Prophetic Contestant and martyr

What implications have all this for us Christians who seek to give theological legitimacy to this ideology, which I would like to term 'indigenous Marxian socialism'? It means giving concrete priority to the image of Jesus as prophetic contestant and martyr. But we are also constrained to hold this image indialectical tension with the images of Jesus as companion and rehabilitator of sinners and outcastes, and also as the self-sacrificing satyagrahi converting enemies with the soul-force of vicarious suffering love. Mao Tse-Tung reminds us that correct ideas or views come from social practice, and we must not forget this. But people engage in social practice with already existing and underlying views, perceptions and motivations. We must be aware of how theory and practice condition each other.

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Christ-centred theory and social action must creatively interact upon such other. Our images of Jesus held in dialectical tension must guide our vision, motivation and action, and be in dynamic interpenetration with Marxian ideology, programming and strategy. We see this in M.M. Thomas, and in Edicio de la Torre of the Philippines, who in life and speech give expression to a 'spirituality for struggle.[10] We see it also in Kim Chi Ha who gives expression likewise in action and word to the 'non-violence that concedes nothing to the oppressor'; and also to the 'violence of love' which involves either direct social action to restore human dignity without breaking the bonds of love, or the bearing of suffering as one chooses the circumstances of one's death.[11] Such ways are curative and liberating for oppressed and oppressor alike, because there is an underlying cherishing or compassion for what is human in people. It was not for nothing that in an earlier generation, C.F. Andrews who waged a heroic and relentless struggle on behalf of the indentured Indian coolie, was named 'Deenabandhu' or 'Friend of the Poor', because of his deep compassion for those who were outcaste and oppressed.

Furthermore, what are the implications for the established church is making such an option and giving such a priority? It means giving genuine support to those action groups who work at the grass-roots level, to enable radical changes in social institutions and psychological attitudes, among different sectors of people in society who suffer oppression and alienation. Genuine support may also mean on occasion critical support, depending on the extent of agreement about the way images of Jesus for society interact in attitude and action with indigenous Marxian socialist ideologies. This is already being

done by programme units within the CCA in relation to action groups in different Asian countries. To what extent the established church within each country, and the CCA as a council of churches is doing so, is an open question; to what extent it should be doing so and the manner in which such support could be extended are questions which need to be faced and tackled at this present time.

Pastoral task with middle-group

Obviously not all in our established churches will wish to give priority to the image of Jesus for society, as prophetic contestant and martyr. But what can we do for those who would like to do so, but have to do so from within the social situation in which they are, or who are confused as to which image of Jesus for society they should give priority? We need to encourage support of diverse kinds as in the time of Jesus and the early church. In addition to the twelve disciples he gathered and trained and with whom he shared a common life, he had a varied kind of support from seventy-two auxiliaries, a group of women who gave financial backing, people who gave hospitality and encouragement like the family in Bethany and the family where the Passover meal was held. Even two members of the oppressive elite like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus showed some sympathy for the movement Jesus inaugurated. In the early church, some congregations as at Jerusalem sought to share life in common, others in Gentile congregations supported the needy, and people with means and position like Lydia, Cornelius, Erastus and Philemon must have given hospitality and support to small groups of full-time church activists, from within their social situation.

We have these precedents to follow in the institutionalized churches to which most of us belong. Within our churches we have to find ways to face and overcome the oppression and alienation which different groups of church members now suffer. Church institutions and the attitudes of church members must reflect the practical implications of the option we make, so that the credibility gap between rhetoric and real life is greatly narrowed. Likewise, those in the churches who are neither oppressive elites nor marginalized sufferers, need to be helped to find ways for resisting those who oppress, changing what is oppressive, and supporting people who are suffering deprivation to help liberate themselves, in ways possible to them in their position within society. Otherwise, this middle group is left without proper pastoral guidance in this sphere of their life as Christians. Many want to resist the temptation to follow after the idols of contemporary society. They usually find inspiration and encouragement in evangelical and charismatic circles which tent to give religious sanction to their efforts to rise in the social ladder and follow after consumerism, while tithing for church enterprises and charitable works, whereas they need to be made auxiliaries to the animators and agitators. This pastoral task is an urgent responsibility not only for churches and national Christian councils, but also for the CCA as a council of these constituent units, and not merely as a centre for varied programme units and commissions. I hope this Assembly will yield some of the necessary guide-lines.

Multiple dimensions of religious symbols

One final comment on this aspect of our theme. The archetypal vision of Markandeya of Vishnu as the 'Cosmic Man' between the dissolution of one *kalpa* and the envolution of another; and

the vision given to Arjuna by the *avatar* Krishna (during the *dvapara* age of the present *mahayuga* in the seventh *manvantara* of the present *varaha kalpa)* of the body of the 'Cosmic Lord' within which all contradictions and paradoxes are resolved, remind us that religious symbols which express reality and also focus and nourish our inner dispositions, have, in addition to a historical dimension, both a heavenly or eschatological and also a cosmic dimension.

In Hinduism the dimension is the all-inclusive body of the 'Cosmic Man' or 'Cosmic Lord'; the heavenly dimension is seen in the intervention of the *avatar* Krishna to dethrone and consign the demonic serpent named Kaliya[12] to the abyss of the ocean, or again when Siva Isvara sucks up the demonic poison of Kalakuta to save the heavenly world, so that his throat continues to remain blue,[13] the historical dimension is seen in the intervention of that *avatar* Krishna in the battle between the Pandavas and Kauravas "for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of the Law...."[14] It is further seen in the life and teaching of Gandhiji (considered as an *avatar* of the Supreme Lord) as a *satyagrahi,* who not only destroyed unjust social structures but also sought to convert the oppressor through the soul-force of non-violent love and suffering. It is also seen in that section of young insurrectionists in Sri Lanka who is 1971 by word and wall-painting showed that they drew inspiration for their liberation uprising, from the example of Gautama Buddha (considered an *avatar* in Hinduism) who disobeyed his parents and elders in starting a liberation movement, with its inward dimension of self-purification and its outward dimension of dethroning the caste system.[15]

In Christianity, the historical dimension is seen in Jesus as prophetic contestant and martyr; and also as the resisting *satyagrahi* who seeks through crucifixion to convert and reconcile the oppressor with vicarious suffering love: in the eschatological or heavenly dimension Jesus is the symbol of the 'Faithful and True' rider on the white horse, meaning the righteous martyr-judge who dethrones the satanic serpent and his host both human and demonic, and who consigns them to the fiery waters of the abyss, which is hell.[16] Jesus is also symbolized as the heavenly high priest who is the friend of sinners and who seeks through his self-sacrifice to reconcile evil-doers to the all-holy God.[17] In the cosmic dimension, Jesus is the cosmic Lord within whose body all beings within the universe are finally recociled.[18]

We are of course dealing with 'mystery' which has to be progressively unveiled through that intuitive insight which arises out of deep inner contemplation. But symbols do convey partial intuitions of such mystery in the sense of hazy reflections seen in a dust-sprinkled mirror. As St. Paul hints in his metaphor in his first letter to the Corinthians,[19] these reflections become clearer as the dust is removed by the Spirit who has been promised to us to guide us steadily into further truth.[20] The 'mind-blowing' symbols of Hinduism make us aware that there is a distinction between the eschatological and the cosmic dimension. The eschatological relates to the end of the earthly human order, and reveals the heavenly dimension in which sinners and demonic beings are overcome, in the sense of being dethroned (or 'put under his feet'),[21] and consigned to separation from God and His normative heavenly order. The time scale of *yugas, mahayugas, manvantaras* and *kalpa* further convey to us that there will be

further and diverse created orders, beyond the earthly and heavenly revealed to us in the Christian scriptures,[22] until through a process of progression and regression at present unrevealed, in the final transcendental order envisaged by Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, all dethroned and separated beings will ultimately be reconciled to the Scripture Lord and those other beings already so reconciled with the body of His completely transfigured cosmos. In Christian symbols, the process will be linear, diverse, liable to zig-zag but finally teleological; and not something which is in invariable succession, is needlessly multiplicative and endlessly cyclic.

But the more restricted symbols of Christianity have to communicate to Hindus that the completely correlated cosmic order which is the body of the Supreme Lord, is not endlessly repetitive and an ultimate and an ultimate mirage, and neither is the acosmic watery abyss on which He reclines; nor that all limiting forms and distinctions will ultimately be merged 'seriatim' in the inwardly realized transcendent Self-Identity of non-duality. Rather, the completely reconciles and transfigured cosmos which is the body of the Supreme Lord, will be the cosmic reflection or image of an inter-penetrative mutuality within transcendent Self-Identity (Triune Godhead). The norms which we struggle to achieve and manifest partially in the historical order are not endlessly dissoluble and repetitive, nor also ultimately illusory, but are progressively transfigured into complete, abiding and final cosmic fruition.

Non-Judaeo-Christian Traditions

I will deal now with the second aspect of the theme 'Living in Christ with people' considering 'people' in the sense of the nations or religio-cultural traditions other than Judaeo-

Christian within which most of us Asian Christians live, making use again of the experiences of the mighty sage Markandeya. These can be seen once again to symbolize our past and present experience as Christians and also as Asians, but on this occasion, in the religio-cultural milieu.

The sage's original life within the cosmos-body of Vishnu which was congenial to his nature and life-style, is the symbol of the Christian church in Asia happily integrated with the Judaeo-Christian religio-cultural traditions of the colonial powers. Spirituality and theology, art and architecture, hymnody and ceremony were, with few exceptions, imitations and extensions of the church in the imperial countries. His sudden first plunge into the acosmic waters of bewilderment and fear, symbolizes the loss of a sense of direction in the sense of being alien, which the established church began to feel in the wake of the religious revival and cultural renaissance of the ancient religions, with their dominant majorities and proselytizing mood. His re-entry into the cosmic order within the body of Vishnu included the retention in his memory of the experience of floundering the acosmic water, and his self-understanding of life was now ambivalent. This symbolizes the recovery of a sense of direction by the church in the post-colonial situation, with its programme of indigenizing its imported religo-cultural traditions, but with an underlying fear of being considered alien, allied to a confusion as to what was essentially Christian in the sense of what elements in the religio-cultural inheritance of the ancient majority religious should or should not be incorporated into the indigenized face of Christianity. Many Asian Christians have lived through or are still living with this kind of experience.

Markandya's second fall into the acosmic waters of confusion and potential chaos was distinguished by his ability, due to past experience, of struggling to remain afloat, until he was vouchsafed the vision of a majestic macrocosmic gander *(Hamsa)* or swan, the sound of whose rhythmic breathing is the magic inner melody of the creation and dissolution of the universe. This gigantic gander hums its own name 'ham-sa', the melody of inhaling (ham) and exhaling (sa) which the yogi hears, when he controls through exercises, the rhythm of his own breath, and which he finally intuits as a manifestation of the melody of the Immortal Gander within him. Markandeya listens to this song like a yogi; but he also hears a simultaneous counter-melody "sa-ham". 'Sa' means 'this' and 'ham' means 'I', and taken together means 'This am I'.   The sage now understands what the vision is conveying, namely 'I am the Gander, and I am the Lord': I am the Supreme Self in the body of the universe; and like a gander resting on the surface of the waters but not bounded by it and ever free to rise above the waters, I am in the cosmos but detached from all it contains.

The sage's struggle to keep afloat after his second experience of tumbling into the acosmic waters of anxiety and potential chaos, symbolize our contemporary religio-cultural experience as Christians and also Asians. We face a conflict between two cultural patterns seeking to dominate the cultural ethos of Asian societies; and each has a theology which seeks to legitimize it. The conflict has the potential to spread confusion and disorder, so that the result may be the loss of genuine cultural identity in our societies. On the one hand, as you know, is the ancient religio-cultural tradition seeking fresh manifestation in a new situation, and on the other hand is the

world-pervasive culture of modernization based on technology and secularity; mass-media techniques, speedy travel and communication, labour-saving and time-reducing gadgets and computers, multiplication of goods to be used and consumed, and a focus on life here and now in this world of time and space, are its major characteristics. The second cultural trend is now an indigenized Asian reality in most of the countries we represent, though its impact varies in different countries.

Markandeya's vision of the gander (hamsa) in its macrocosmic and inward aspects which gave him a sense of direction and serenity, symbolize for us the vision which we must retain in the face of the conflict we face as Asians and Christians. The gander is a symbol not only of that thrust for transcendent reality and its inward realization which is basic to the ancient Asian religions; it is also the symbol in cultures moulded by Hinduism and Buddhism for beauty of form as in women, grace of movement as in birds, and for discriminative insight such as the ability to separate and drink only the milk in a vessel containing a mixture of water and milk. It is furthermore a recurring motif either singly or with intertwined necks in all the decorative arts and crafts.[23] In short, it represents a world-view, which envisions transcendent reality as the source of emanating and dynamic life in each and all its joyous and painful, good and evil manifestations; which sees all such fecund created forms, embodiments and species as transmutable into each other, signifying the underlying oneness of all life; in which the arts and crafts were the products of aesthetic skills guided by a religious vision, and also in which myths and rites gave meaning and a sense of direction to the inner psyche of persons and communities.

New expressions of old religio-cultures

In all our societies such religio-cultures not only give evidence of their durability, but are also finding anew expressions as they seek to integrate the perceived experience of contemporary life into the inheritance of a living past. The path to *Samadhi* is viewed not so much through the rejection of what is alluring, and the dissolving of what is illusory and delusive in created forms but through the affirmation and transcending of these forms. The poet Tagore says:

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation.

I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear thy delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy,

And all my desires ripen into fruits of love."[24]

Gandhiji sees the path to union with God through action in the world rather than through the life of contemplation in withdrawal from society; through the life-style of the *satyagrahi* rather than that of the *sannyasi*. He says:

"What I want to achieve .... is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain *moksha* (salvation).... All that I do by way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this end. To see the all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires to that cannot keep out of any field of life."[25]

In Sri Lanka as elsewhere, all aspects of culture have evidenced new dimensions given to old themes and symbols. This is seen among others in the paintings and murals of Senaka Senanayake, in the dance-rhythms and ballet creations of

Chitrasena, in the music and songs of Nanda Malini Gokula, in the textile work of Vipula Dharmawardhana, in the plays of Simon Navagaththegama, and in the poetry of Senarat Tennekoon. In one of the dramas produced by Navagaththegama, he makes use of a historical incidents where the king who liked on occasion to exchange places with a palace guard closely resembling him in appearance eventually found himself dethroned, in order to raise contemporary questions to whether life itself is but a meaningless drama, and to legitimize contemporary revolutions which dethrone oppressive rulers. In one of Senarat Tennekoon poems he uses ancient Buddhist themes with a contemporary thrust; he says:

> "In the mill of life turns the wheel of existence
> Warmed by the fire of lust the human iron is fashioned
> On the red hot iron falls the hammer of sin
> After a long wait in the mill smoothened and perfected it
> comes out to the market place of society."[26]

In all our cultures also, the newness and immediacy of contemporary life with its suffering and joy, its aspirations and disappointments, its struggles to achieve and its sense of hopelessness, its felt perceptions and sensitive intimations, are as we all know, finding expression in new symbols whether visual or verbal, and in new sounds whether rhythmic or melodic. There is a break with the past either in sheer newness or in radical contrast with the perceptions and symbols of the past. We have to be thankful to the CCA for introducing us the dual expressions of new cultural forms in such works as 'Christian Art Asia', 'New Songs of Asian Cities', and the anthologies of poetry and painting prose and photography entitled 'Suffering and Hope', 'Your Kingdom Come 'Voices of

Women', 'No Place in the Inn' and 'Living in Christ with People In these productions we see and read and hear both the past religious culture finding new expression, and also the present secular culture seeking its own contemporary religious expression. The impact of technology, secularity a mass-media expertise is pervasively evident in the service of both emerging cultural expressions.

Response to Modernisation

What then should be our response to the world-pervasive culture. modernisation? We have to make discriminating use of modernisation to express new dimensions of our past religious cultures, and also retain discriminative sense of our enduring traditions so as to find a religious dimension in our preset secular culture with its technology. In the midst of the conflict between cultures in Asia, our option must be to hold fast to the ultimacy of a religious-oriented culture without being absolutist, while having a positive and discriminative openness to secularism and technology. After all, the biblical images of the better heavenly world order include not only a rustic garden and a river, but also a city with its sophistication; not merely the removal of pain and poverty, but also the enjoyment of bridal garments and a wedding banquet.[27] We need use not only appropriate but also sophisticated technology, not only crafts, b also gadgets, not only to walk but also to fly, not only to engage in interpersonal conversation but also to use mass-media communication, not only to satisfy basic needs but also to taste the good things of life. In itself the thrust modernisation need not ruin but can enhance the quality of life. It is unbridle consumerism, technology and secularism that are demonic and damage the psyche of persons and

communities while eroding and poisoning nature; it is technology misused to deprive the oppressed of their due share, and to deceive the masses with superficial values, while concentrating power, privilege and profit I an elite that is equally evil. Our ideological evaluation of modernization as a culture-pattern must be in dialectical tension with our ideological option for those who face oppression through social structures and alienation through psychological pressures; and the kind of tension we experience will partly no doubt depend on whether our base is the traditional, rural community or the modern urban society.

Overcoming conflicting perceptions

We must face these diverse tensions within the life of our established churches, rural congregations and urban congregations, the indigenisers and the modernisers, those who want to say only a 'The Lord is my Shepherd' and those who want to say only 'The Lord is my Pace-setter'. must find ways to face and overcome their conflicting perceptions, and whatever oppression and alienation results therefrom. In this instance too, that is with regard to cultural expression, there is that group of people within the churches who will need to become auxiliaries to the animators and agitators. Pastoral guide-lines will again be required from this Assembly, to enable them to make their options with discrimination, from within the situation in which they are based.

A final comment on this religio-cultural aspect of our theme. The second archetypal vision of Vishnu as 'Cosmic Gander', and the meaning which the imagery and recurring motif of the gander has for cultures influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, are an indication that religio-cultural visions are

distinguished by their basic symbols and co-ordinating images. Theology is coloured by metaphysics, as much as by ideology.

The cosmic gander signified the Supreme Lord as manifested to the sage in relation to the emanated cosmos. The inward rhythmic breathing of the Supreme Self is made to become concurrent with the disciplined rhythmic breathing of the yogi, who whether by the path of world renunciation or world acceptance, finally becomes aware of identity with the Supreme Self. The point is that the basic symbol is 'identity' or union without or beyond distinction *(nirvikalpa samadhi)* where the epistemic subject-object dichotomy vanishes; the final mystic state is that of pure or inexpressible, ineffable awareness, in fathomless silence. It is an utterly interiorized abiding within the realized, life-transforming experience of non-duality or non-otherness. For the most part Hindu symbols indicate that the union with distinction with the Supreme Self in the cosmic dimension (*savikalpa Samadhi)* leads more or less finally to identity (or union, without/beyond distinction) with indescribable Ultimate Reality in the dimension of transcendence. In terms of Christian experience and imagery, the symbol of 'mergence' is more basic than the symbol of 'interpenetrative mutuality' and the metaphor of non-purposiveness or 'self-regarding purpose' more basic than the metaphor of 'other-regarding purpose'[28] when seeking to communicate what is a mystery inwardly realized in silence. As a Zen Buddhist verse on Enlightenment says, "when they curiously question thee seeking to know what it is ....offer them Silence only ....Silence, and a finger pointing the way."

The symbol of the cosmic gander in its religious aspect, also indicates that, like the gander who swims on the surface of

the waters but is not bound to it and is free to fly far beyond into high heaven, the Supreme Self both abides in the cosmos but is also not bound to it and totally detached from it. The symbol of the gander in its cultural aspect, namely as signifying the graceful movement of birds, sensuous form of women and the discriminative insight of the wise heavenly or earthly being, indicates two further intimations; one is that all visible emanations, or particularized embodiments within the cosmos are appearances or manifestations of the Supreme Self; the other is that all particularized embodiments are transmutable into each other. The underlying image is that of a player in a drama putting on particular masks whether joyful or painful, good or evil, to convey his various and changeable roles; masks which he can put on and take off at will without affecting his basic identity. Other underlying images to convey the relation of the Supreme Self to the cosmos in Hinduism are those of a conjuror's illusory contrivances, the enjoyable sport indulged at will by a king, the pastimes of an enjoyer of bliss alluring others to contribute to his relishing of bliss, the relentless and sustaining rhythmic gestures of the dancer, the unrestrained and alluring progeny of a fecund mother. The contrivances can be dissolved, the sport can cease, the pastimes can be discontinued, the gestures can alter so as to result in rhythmic and relentless disintegration, and the progeny can be consumed by a mother turned voracious. The images convey unrestrained, endless, purposeless, evolution and involution, embodiments and dissolution, wherein the distinction between good and evil, beautiful and ugly, is not ultimate, and even the distinction between nescience and pure awareness need not be considered ultimate. Therefore the particularized embodiments or forms

within the intricate but unified web of the cosmos transmute into each other, because they are such and all ultimately illusory manifestations within the all containing consciousness, ultimately aimless embodiments within the all-activating immanent energy, and ultimately irresistibly allured individuations within the all –enhancing bliss of the Supreme Self.

Controlling symbol: the Lamb that was slain.

The archetypal biblical vision for the Christian is the slaughtered cosmic Lamb standing within the throne of God with ten horns and seven eyes, and luminous with the dazzling light of the Divine Presence.[29] In terms of Hindu insights, it means that this Lamb symbolizes the man Jesus divinized or Christified, in the sense of possessing all the cosmic attributes and performing all the cosmic functions of Christ, (e.g. omnipotence and omniscience, and illumined within by the dazzling light of transcendent Divinity), who also as 'Christ' transcends the cosmos.[30] What we discern through this image is not the transcendent face of Christ, but the cosmic face of Christ Jesus. What is revealed to us is that the utterly interiorized union (absorption) of the Divine and the human in Christ Jesus, is best described as savikalpa samadhi rather than as nirvi- kalpa samadhi; we know that Jesus fully participates in, and interpenetrates with the cosmic dimension of Christ through the interiorized dynamism of the (feminine) Holy Spirit. But to what degree he participates in the transcendental dimension of Christ within the complex and abounding plentitude of Divine Self-Identity (nirvikalpa samadhi) which implies deification rather than divinization is beyond our present discernment, and highly debatable. What is further discernible in the biblical revelation is

that we too have the opportunity of being divinized in union with Christ Jesus. The book of Revelation indicates that those who bear the mark of the Lamb on their foreheads will see the face of God as revealed in Christ Jesus and worship Him in the heavenly dimension. But St. Paul reminds us that we shall be transformed into His likeness in ever-increasing degree through the interiorised potency of the Spirit, and St. John indicates that we shall become like Him when we see Him as He really is.33 We are called finally to share in all His cosmic attributes and functions because He is our elder brother and forerunner; but we are also called to worship Him because as source and head of our common life, He is also our Lord. We seem to be called to divinization rather than deification; to see finally in union (absorption with distinction) with Christ Jesus, only the cosmic face and not the transcendent face of Divinity, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 34 The gigantic piece of sculpture at Elephanta, near Bombay, of the Supreme Self as Trimurti gives us a visual human symbol of the beatific vision to which we have been called. But unlike in the symbols of Hinduism, the biblical symbols indicate that the manifested cosmic face of Maheswara Trimurti, is verily a reflection of the unmanifested transcendent face of Absolute Deity. Be that as it may, we must not lose hold of the Christian mystic thrust personally and corporately, [35][a] in the context of Asia, with its past religiosity and emerging secularity. In short, a spirituality of contemplative adoration must be held in dialectical tension with a spirituality of struggle in society.

Christ has borne our alienation.

Whereas the gander who swims at will in the water but is essentially detached from it symbolises the Supreme Self abiding in but detached from the cosmic process, the biblical symbol of the Lamb, slaughtered though standing luminous and regnant, indicates a different insight into the relationship of God to the cosmos. [35b] The imagery of 'the Lamb of God who bears and removes the sin of the world' indicates that Christ Jesus experienced the state of utter alienation and meaninglessness with its concomitant horror, in vicarious loving compassion, so as to remove the barrier between God and mankind along with the cosmos, resulting from evil or demonic sinfulness. In terms of Hindu imagery, the unitive interpenetration of the cosmic Christ with the human Jesus can be described by saying that the experience of Christ Jesus is a constant 'samadhi' experience, wherein the cosmic consciousness and love includes the human consciousness and love in one complex and concomitant experience. The initiative is taken by the cosmic Christ who penetrates the human Jesus by way of hidden self-effacement, so that the human Jesus yields responsively to His hidden initiative from birth, stage by stage and in ever-deepening levels of interiorized surrender, to the final suffering and death on the cross. This unitive experience resulting from unceasing interpenetrative mutual response was dominated by conscious self-giving and other-cherishing love. On the cross, the unitive experience of mutually responsive interpenetration remained but the consciousness of its peace and joy were sacrificed for the sake of others, to experience both the horrified condemnation of sin as self-arrogating rejection of Divine Love, and also its resulting experience of total alienation and meaninglessness.

The cosmic Christ experienced through the human Jesus the desolating experience, and the human Jesus experienced through the cosmic Christ the horrified (holy) condemnation, but the unitive loving compassion for the sake of all others remained inviolate. That is why the image of the slaughtered Lamb yet standing luminous and regnant, is the symbol of divinization through bearing and removing the 'separation' between creatures and Creator which results from sin. The Lamb is immersed in this sin and separation, which signifies that they are within the all-containing love of the Divine Creator.[36] For, in the words of William Temple, 'God plus Creation equals God'. We must bear the mark of the Lamb and follow Him if we are to be divinized like Him.

Sin can so separate because biblical symbolism indicates that the cosmos is a creation not an emanation; that its particular embodiments are the finite, restrained and purposive expressions of an Infinite Creator. The underlying images are those of a skilled craftsman and artist creating products with aesthetic vision, of a father or mother bringing to birth, out of self-giving and other- cherishing love, progeny with whom can be shared a plentitude of life, and who will be enabled to reflect at their own level, this self-giving and other-cherishing love, within one unified family.[37] Whatever is created is from within the fecund abyss of the Creator.[38]

The transcendent Creator is not without or beyond all qualities; but possesses such qualities as self-giving and other-cherishing loving compassion, profound and serene awareness, aesthetic sensibility, joyous creativity, goodness, inexpressible and infinite mode. Therefore, however much re-cycling and transmutation there may be within created things and beings,

each creation is singular, and meant to express or reflect in diverse fashions and different degrees, though finite in character, the aesthetic, moral and spiritual qualities which the transcendent Creator possesses in infinite perfection. Christ Jesus is the most singular of all such creations.

Creatureliness involves separation from the Creator because of the ontological distance between what is finite, limited and contingent of whatever kind, and what is infinite, unlimited and unconditioned; but this distance is within the all-containing love of the Creator.[39] Sinfulness involves an existential alienation and qualitative moral or spiritual separation, because creatures reject their finiteness. The all-containing love of the Creator must bear this alienation and accept the horrified condemnation of creatures rejecting their status, in order to overcome the separation resulting from sin.[40] That is why the cosmic slaughtered Lamb is the sign and sacrament of divinization for the Christian, whatever he may learn from Hindu experience and imagery; and his calling is to bear witness to others by life and speech regarding this unique controlling image.

Furthermore, the Lamb is within a throne, and is surrounded by every kind of creature within the cosmos. From within the throne flows a river which nourishes a tree with its leaves and fruit. All this is within a city illuminated and decorated. All these pictures indicate that the particularized embodiments of creation have their own uniqueness, and will continue to do so, even when the whole creation is transfigured from earthly, to heavenly and finally into its spiritualized cosmic dimension. There is no doubt an underlying unity within the cosmos, since all creatures are activated by the dynamic energy

and encompassed by the all-embracing love and design of the Creator. But the cosmos is an intricate mosaic within which each detail has its unique place; the world process is a drama within which each creature has an unique role to play; Christ Jesus has the most unique role to play in shaping its final destiny. Whatever therefore is beautiful and unique within this mosaic will have final and abiding cosmic fruition. And our unique cultural heritages will be attracted into and find their specific place within the heavenly city and finally within the cosmic body, by the light that irradiates from the Lamb.[41]

'People' as disciples of Jesus

I now turn to the third aspect of our theme 'Living in Christ with people', considering 'people' in the sense of the community of the baptized disciples of Jesus Christ, making use of Markandeya's third archetypal vision while struggling in the acosmic waters.

He saw a child luminous with dazzling splendour cheerfully at play, undismayed amidst the boundless waters. This god-like child welcomed the sage by his first name, asked him to come near without fear, and also addressed him as 'my child'. The hoary old seer was offended because the use of the terms 'Markandeya' and 'child', insulted his venerable age, his character as a sage and the psychic powers he possessed, which even the gods respected; and he burst into a display of temper. But when the divine child calmly explained matters with a cosmic wisdom, the sage was humbled, and prayed for further insight and guidance.

Continuing triumphalism

This vision and encounter symbolises the position of the church in Asia with regard to her self-understanding in relation to

her Lord, her own nature, and her function in the Asian scene. In spite being plunged into the acosmic waters of chaos and potential destruction, the sage's arrogant appreciation of himself remained; that is why he was offended and later humbled. Likewise, in spite of the loss of morale, of a sense of being alien, and of both confusion and underlyin fear in the face of the political, cultural and socio-economic revolution in Asia the triumphalism of the church remains. The first phase was in the colonial era and the second phase is in the neo-colonial situation now dominating our societies. Money is still available from the funding agencies in the West to the established churches, to religious orders; development project-holders and also to social activists as well; and money is a dominant source of power in our societies where the majority of our people are poor. It is easy to be triumphalist in one way or another in such a situation; it is hard to be lowly and function a servants of others.

Jesus the Servant-King

It is a curious feature in the biblical writings that while the symbol of Jesus on earth as a lowly servant is a recurring one, the symbol of Jesus in his glorified state is so constantly triumphalist. But mercifully there is no exception. The early church in Jerusalem under threat of persecution held on to a vision of their Lord as 'the holy servant Jesus'. It is not only Jesus the Messiah who is entitled 'holy Servant' but also Jesus the Lord.[42] The glorified Lord remains forever a servant, as much as he remains a high priest. Another insightful feature is that the Greek word translated as 'servant' properly means 'a child' And in the Synoptic Gospels, when the disciples were arguing as to who was the greatest among them Jesus took a little child and making him stand in front of the disciples and using him as a sign

said that the greatest disciple is the one who is humble, takes the least or last place, and is the servant of all. The child, like the servant, was meant to exhibit these qualities in the society in which Jesus lived; and both were vulnerable to those with greater power.[43]

We Christians in Asia are caught in this ecclesio-ideological conflict between triumphalist disciples of a triumphalist Lord, and servant disciples of a servant Lord; whereas the biblical insights rightly understood, point to a Lord who exercises that kind of authority over others and achieves that kind of success in the world, which arise from those qualities of character which He indicated as belonging to a servant or child. There is divine wisdom in this symbolism that reminds us of the different kind of divine wisdom which humbled the triumphalist sage Markandeya in his encounter with the Supreme Lord. Similarly, we Christians in Asia, need to encounter afresh our only Lord so that His divine wisdom may humble us for performing service and exercising power in His name. This also was the prayer of the group of early disciples in Jerusalem in their vulnerable situation in relation to the authorities.

Implications for Worship

What are the implications then for the established church in opting to be disciples of Christ Jesus as the servant Lord? First, there are implications in the sphere of worship. The image of the Lord we worship must be that of a servant whose royalty is in His service, rather than of a king whose royalty is in his majesty, or of a handsome film-star whose attraction is in his glamour. There are three indigenous symbols for the Lord Jesus I see every day; two are in the Cathedral in which I take services,

and one is in the house in which I live. They are creations of Buddhists working in collaboration with Christians. One is of Christ with wounds reigning from the cross as prophet, priest and king; the other is of Christ naked on the cross, but with the poise of the dancer whose rhythmic dance-beat of love on the cross, has overcome the poisonous virus of evil. The third is of an ordinary man emerging from the background of the cross with the five blood-stained wounds, standing in the midst of ordinary people to serve them. It is the latter figure of Christ as the servant Lord that inspires me most, and is the figure that has special relevance for Christians in Asia today.

The figures or images of Jesus that dominate our imagination shape our worship and mould our actions. In our painting and sculpture, our hymns and prayers the image of Jesus as the servant Lord needs to be given greater prominence. Likewise, we need to make our places of worship much more places where service is rendered to others; and make places where service is rendered to others in everyday life, also places of worship. Our rites and ceremonies, our forms of worship must through shared silence and shared actions and gestures, especially in small groups, convey the mystery and majesty of the lowliness of the servant Lord, than of the pomp and panoply of a reigning monarch. Serving food to each other, washing each other's feet in a natural way, rather than a 'stunt', in the context of shared worship can convey the presence of the Lord among us as One who serves. This kind of stress on the servant Lord need not be the sole preserve of small groups of Christians outside the mainstream of the established church. The way that the late Subhir Biswas made use of St. Paul's Cathedral in Calcutta through worship and service to convey Jesus as the

servant Lord is an outstanding example. He showed in concrete terms what it meant to come down the ladder in lowliness, and to break down the barriers erected by society through outreaching and caring service; and laid down is life as a result. But others can follow his example in their own way, within the congregations to which they belong.

Implications for pastoral care and mission

Secondly, there are implications in the sphere of pastoral care. D.T. Niles wanted the Christian Conference of Asia to be not only a Conference or Council of established churches but also an enabling agency to encourage, support and inter-link those Christians and groups in Asia who were engaged in pioneering ventures in the service of the Lord Jesus. He had the hope that established churches and pioneers would work together. In actual fact they have steadily grown apart and in many instances are either in conflict or ignore each other. Both parties belong to the CCA: and if we claim to be disciples of the servant Lord, we have to learn to serve each other by coming down the ladder of pride and breaking down the barrier of resentment; to be open and vulnerable to each other in lowliness, rather than engage in power-politics, either to do harm to each other, or to gain sufficient funds so as to ignore each other. At this Assembly, there will be the God-given opportunity to find ways of serving each other in lowliness. In addition, we have to go back inspired to do the same in our own local situations, so that there may emerge partnerships of congregations and pioneer groups held together by the renewing energy of the servant Lord, in the midst of unavoidable conflicts about options and policies.

As those who are called 'ecumeniacs', we need to do the same with our fellow Christians who are called evangelicals and

charismatics. This is far more difficult as we all know, and is a sad commentary on the inability of the household of God in Asia and elsewhere to keep the unity of these three traditions in the bond of peace and co-operative effort. However, in our local situations, there are far greater opportunities for mutual friendship and lowly service of which we must make use. Sharing worship in small house groups, joining in common prayer and fasting for healing and exorcism in the name of the Lord Jesus, and helping each other in the ordinary needs of daily life, will enable a deeper cherishing of each other, in spite of differences in conviction and emphasis. We need to lean more on the servant Lord and His power in the spirit of fellow-pilgrims and wayfarers along the path of Christian discipleship.   I have found such ways an enriching experience in my own personal life; and was first motivated to venture in these ways because of the impact of that valuable but now forgotten book by Lesslie Newbigin, entitled "The Household of God'.[44] I can only commend to you the enrichment I have received once the step was taken, to come down the ladder of Anglicanism and cross the barriers of sectarianism.

Thirdly, there are implications in following the servant Lord, in the sphere of mission.   D.T. Niles reminded us of the self-hood of the Asian churches, in relation to the Western churches that had dominated them in the colonial era. He also reminded us of the need to see the Christian community within the human community and to learn to confess the faith in the context. What we see now is that in order to serve the human community in our midst and confess the faith, the Asian churches have to follow their servant Lord and lose their

postcolonial self-hood, in order to find their real self-hood within the contemporary Asian situation.

Learning from fellow-Asians

This means that we have to share life with our fellow-Asians accepting our position as vulnerable minorities, but nonetheless discerning the presence and activity of the servant Lord wherever we share life for the sake of His kingdom or new order of life. It involves seeking to listen and learn from people of other religions and ideologies in their insights and commitments. Silent listening and genuine friendship are the basic elements as we engage in the Lord's mission. As we have mentioned earlier, He has revealed much in the past and present experience of the peoples among whom we are placed, whether in their enduring achievements of their present struggles and aspirations. We learn from them not only about their discernments and ways of service arising from their heritage, but also of their understanding of who Jesus is and what He means to them. Gandhi is one example, there are many others, ordinary people like ourselves who provide further examples. [45]

Sharing in common struggles

There is also common action and sharing of common struggles with others. Whether it be struggles on behalf of oppressed and alienated groups, efforts at reconciliation, ways of caring for and rehabilitating outcastes and those handicapped, or whether it be in the spheres of culture, and in the common aspiration for holiness and saintliness in surrender to God and in service to others, we are engaged with others in the mission of the servant Lord. Nothing good or beautiful or worthwhile is outside His kingdom, and nothing evil or painful is outside His power to transform, and make whole. There is much

more to be done to help Christians and congregations to join others in cherishing and enhancing what is human in the midst of our daily lives and our shared historical experience. But we must be ready to take risks, suffer losses and face contradictions, where we are. This is where we get stuck and prefer to remain in our ghettos. We all know how easy and fatal it is to look the other way like the priest and levite; and to return back to old was like the rich young man, We deny like Peter, betray like Judas, doubt like Thomas, fear like the other disciples. But the servant Lord is in our midst as One who serves, and He continues to draw us out of ourselves.

Christ in you, the hope of glory

Lastly, there is the confession of faith in the midst of common action and shared life, and after listening and learning. The confession is "Christ in you the hope of glory'; this is the secret hidden in past times, and now to be made known in the midst of Asian life and history. Christ is incognito within those who know Him not, and is cognito within us who know and acknowledge Him, but is in each and all, as the hope of life glorified and divinized, by surrender to the Father's will, and by lowly service to all who are His children, This is the way, the life and the truth. As we share the way and the life, we make known the truth to our neighbours and fellow wayfarers, about Christ Jesus. Whom He calls He will make His disciples, and lead to baptism and sharing in the breaking of bread, and in the apostolic fellowship.   Our duty is to testify, but who accepts that testimony is the work of His free and sovereign grace. As D.T. Niles says:

Cognito and incognito
and never the one without the other

He comes constantly challenging discovery.
To discover Him
Is to discover God and neighbour too.[46]

Peter discovered God in Christ afresh when he discovered that the Gentile Comelius was his neighbour and brother in whom Christ had hitherto been at work incognito. The magi in whom Christ was incognito discovered Christ cognito in Jesus, through the help not only of the star but also of the Jewish Scriptures, though Jesus' own people refused to follow them along the unexpected but new and living way.47 The ways of discovery are diverse but always fresh when responsive to His sovereign will.

One final word. I am sorry that I cannot deliver this lecture myself. Illness has laid me low. Therefore, I end with the words of Tagore, which echo my thoughts:

I thought that my voyage had come to its end....
that provisions were exhausted...
But I find that thy will knows no end in me.
And when old words die out on the tongue.
New melodies break forth from the heart.[48]

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1.Ecclesiasticus 44:1 & 11.
2. Luke 20:19; Mark 12:12; Mathew 21:46.
3. Isaiah 60:5;9& 11; Revelation 21:24-26.
4.Acts 15:14; 1 Peter 2:9-10.
5. Matsya Purana CLXVII, 13-66. (cf H. Zimmer's rendering of this story in his "Myths and Symbols in the Art and Civilization of India".)
6. "Ambalamaka Nade"
7. "Bhagavad Gita" XI: 40-44 (cf Martin Conway's comments quoted by M.M. Thomas in p. 127 of WCC Central Committee Minutes and Reports of Twenty Fifth Meeting on August 13th-23rd 1972).

8(a) cf Y.Kim's and Kim Chi-Ha's distinction between 'people' as 'minjung', as a broadly defined term signifying 'nobodyness' or 'loss of being subjects of one's destiny', and 'people' as 'immin' in the sense of 'proletariat' in a classical Marxist sense, on pp 38-39 in "Asian Theological Reflections on Suffering and Hope", CCA-Asia Focus, 1977.

8(b) Marxist and Christian analysis complement and conflict with each other. Marxism makes the basic point that social structures, cultural conscious- ness and human relationships in their deformation and regeneration must be perceived through the category of class. Christianity makes the basic point that while the category of class is important, the more basic categories to understand the human situation in its totality are the transcendent and the demonic, especially as these are revealed through Jesus Christ.

9. cf 'World Buddhism quoted by Aloysius Pieris S.J. in his paper "Towards an Asian Theology of Liberation; Some Religio-Cultural Guidelines" read at the Asian Theological Conference in Sri Lanka, January 7-20 1979.

10. "My Five Years in Prison" by Fr Edicio de la Torre, page 3.

11. cf quotations by John. C. England on p. 137 of his article entitled "Kim Chi Ha and the Poetry of Christian Dissent" in Vol. XXI No. 3 1978, its Ching Feng Magazine, Hong Kong.

12. Vishnu Purana V:7

13. Matsya Purana CCV, 1-6.

14. Bhagavad Gita IV:8

15.Ref: 46 which is cyclostyled sheet by A. Bharati on 'Monastic and Lay Buddhism in the 1971 Sri Lanka Insurgency' and Wall Pictures 9 and 12 in "The April 1971 Insurrection in Ceylon: A Biblio- graphical Commentary" by H.A.I. Goonetilleke, 1975.

16. Revelation 19:11-16; 20: 10-15.

17. Hebrew 4:14-16; 7:24-25; 8:1-2.

18. Colossians 1:15-20.

19. 1 Corinthians 13:12.

20. John 16:12-13.

21. Hebrews 10:12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:25.

22. cf Ephesians 3:21 R.V. margin reading which is "All the generations of the age of the ages"; and p 218 in "The Wisdom of God" by S. Pulgakov, Jed London 1937, for similar notion.

23. cf pp 85-86, Note on 'Hamsa' in "Medieval Sinhalese Art" by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 1956 Edition.

24. Gitanjali, 73.

25. Quoted from "Story of my Experiments with Truth" by M.K. Gandhi.

26. "Layime Hedava p. 87 by S. Tennekoon.

27.Revelation 22:1-2; 21:9-11; 7:13-17; 19:7-9.

28. cf use of term 'ananyatva' by M. Sunder Rao in his pamphlet "Ananyatva: ed Realisation of Christian Non-Duality". . . C.I.S.R.S., Bangalore.bois

29. Exodus 29:38-43; Rev. 5:6, 21:23, 22:1: and John 12:31 with Heb. 1:3, to al cf W. Temple on p. 195 of his "Readings in S. John's Gospel". vise sikib cf also K.M. Bannerjea's attempt to find this symbol anticipated in the cosmic symbol of Yagna-Purusha/Prajapati on pp 11-17 in his "The Relation between Christianity and Hinduism", Madras, CLS, 1892.

30. Heb. 1:1-3(a); John 1:1-3, 17:5 & 24; Colossians 2:9. Cf attempt to express this notion in terms of Isvara/Brahman by R. Pannikar in his "The Unknown Christ of Hinduism" p. 126 ff on 'The Christological bhasya'.

31. cf interpretation of Greek word for dove symbolising descent of Holy ud Spirit at baptism of Jesus, which is 'peristera', as meaning 'Bird of Istar' (Istar is 'the Great Mother'), by Henriette Katoppo on p. 148 of 'Asia's Struggle for Full Humanity' edited by V. Fabella; where she refers to pp 308-309 of "Maria in der Feier des Kirchenjahres", by Gerhard Voss.

32. If the divine-human union in Christ Jesus is described as a 'hypostatic union' in traditional Greek terminology, then deification or sharing in the transcendental dimension of Christ is signified. But if this union is described in Hindu terminology as a constant samadhi state of interiorised spirituality based on mutual self-effacing inter-penetration, between Christ and unfallen human nature in the historic Jesus, then whether divinisation in this instance also involves deification (i.e. sharing in the cosmic Christ also involves sharing in the transcendent Christ) is viewed as a mystery, not necessarily discernible in our present earthly state. The biblical evidence is not decisive in either direction.

33. Rev. 22:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2

34. cf 1 Peter 5:10 with 1 Timothy 6:15-16.

35(a).cf 'What a man takes in by contemplation, he must pour out in love' (Eckhart); 'Let him who desires to see God, wipe his mirror and cleanse his heart' (Richard of S. Victor)

35(b) Hindu and Christian symbolism complement and conflict with each other. Hindu imagery makes the basic point that secondary reality is derivative and not primordial, and concludes that it must finally cease to be 'separate from' primordial reality. Christian imagery makes the basic point that secondary reality is reality shared by primordial reality, and concludes that though derivative it need not cease to be 'separate' because primordial reality wills this kind of sharing.

36. Isaiah 45:7. NB: "The nearest comparisons to the image of the cosmic self- sacrificing/self-giving Christ Jesus radiating liberating love to release all creatures from sin, so as to integrate them into a transfigured/spiritualized cosmic unity through and in Him, before Himself yielding this completed totality to the fundamental Source symbolised by the name 'Father', are the Paramuktas in certain schools of Hinduism who remain as cosmic liberated beings radiating loving service in the universe until every sentient being is finally released 'seriatim' from the operation of maya, before they themselves merge into the Absolute; or the Boddhisatvas in certain schools of Mahayana Buddhism who remain as cosmic liberated beings, radiate universal loving compassion until every being is finally released 'seriatim' from samsara, before they themselves attain to Nirvana."

37. "Nothing is precious save what is yourself in others and others in yourself" (Teilhard de Chardin)

38. "God creates the world... out of himself, out of the abundance of his own resources. Nothing new is created for God by the life of the world of creatures... Nothing can exist outside God. This is not pantheism, but pan-entheism."cf pp 99 & 100 ibid, S. Pulgakov.

39. cf D. Fakirbhai "The Philosphy of Love" p. 2 where this notion is expressed in terms PARAMA PREMA; PARA-BRAHMAN.
cf the interpretation of 'Maya' by Brahmabandha Upadhyaya to express the Christian view of creation in 'Sophia' Feb-March 1899.

40. cf pp 217-219 & pp 137 ibid, S. Pulgakov.

41. Rev. 21:23-26.

42. Acts 2:36; 3:13; 4:27-30.

43. Mathew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37; Luke 9:46-48.

44. S.C.M. Press 1955.

45. cf 'Christian Art in Asia' ed: by M. Takenaka; paintings 72 and 74 by S. Chanda and K.C.S. Pannikar (both Hindus); and 'Memo to JC' by Maureen Watson, and Australian Aboriginee, in "Suffering and Hope" ed. Ron O. Grady and Lee Soo Jin, CCA, 1976.

46. Quoted from 'A Testament of Faith'

47. cf pp 28.30 in "Contemporary Ecumenism and Asia's Search for Christ" by Aloysius Pieris S.J., and his interpretation of this story as a paradigm for today.

48. Gitanjali, 37.

Research Dissemination and Application.

Mendizabal, Enrique (2013): Research uptake: what is it and can it be measured? https://onthinktanks.org/articles/research-uptake-what-is-it-and-can-it-be-measured/

Research uptake is not always 'up'

Not all ideas flow 'upwards' and to 'policymakers'. For most researchers the most immediate audience are the other researchers. Ideas take time to develop, and researchers need to share them with their peers first. As they do so, preliminary ideas, findings, research methods, tools, etc. flow in both (or more directions). 'Uptake' therefore can very well be 'sidetake'. And when researchers share with other researchers, they often use rather technical terms and formats, and so we should not mind it if they employ channels and tools not relevant to policymakers. This should remind us that there are many researchers in policymaking roles, too; not all research is academic.

By the same token, uptake' could also be 'downtake'. Much of the research done is directed not at high level political decision-makers but at the public (think of public health information) or practitioners (think of management advice and manuals).

Uptake (or sidetake, or downtake) is unlikely to be about research findings alone

If the findings were all we cared about, then research outputs would not be more than a few paragraphs or bullet-points long. Getting there is as important, if not more important, than the findings. How else could we replicate experiments or check their

accuracy? Methods, tools, the data-sets collected, the analyses undertaken, etc. matter as well and may be subject of 'uptake'.

The process is important too because it helps us to maintain the quality of the conversation between the different participants of any policy process. Without policymakers understanding where ideas come from, we risk them becoming functional idiots (see Dumbing Down the Audience for a reflection on how think tanks may be contributing to this), incapable of making informed decisions, even if they have been dictated by a researcher (research based is not the same as informed decision making).

Replication is uptake too (and so is inspiration)

There is also an element of inter-generational transfer of skills that must be taken into account when we consider research uptake. Much of the research that goes on in universities and think tanks has the purpose of helping to train new generations of researchers. If all research work and all communication efforts were targeted at policymakers' immediate needs what would be taught to students? Writing a 'macroeconomics' textbook, a new 'introduction to sociology' book, or similar efforts should be seen as important as putting together a policy brief. More important, in fact. The students who benefit from these research outputs are likely to have an impact on politics and policy far beyond the capacity of any single researcher or research project. For think tanks, helping to form the next generations of policymakers, analysts, and researchers is a core function.

Similarly, a significant number of studies that may look, to the layman or woman, as quite useless, are indispensable for the more practical and use-inspired work funders crave. Before we can quantify the impact of a programme on a population we need to explore theories, collect data, clean the data, test the data, test the theories on the data, maybe test our assumptions, review the assumptions, etc. Each one of these can be a study on its own right and each one may take days or years. In the end a 'finding' may only be arrived at after years of work during which more than one researcher may have been in charge.

In a think tank, it would be expected that a researcher in charge of an evaluation or a particular study will use work carried out by another researcher working on an entirely different thing, probably sometime in the past when there could have been no idea of how that would would have been used in the future. This co-production of knowledge can stretch beyond a single organisation and policy community.

It is not just about making policy recommendations
The purpose of research at think tanks and policy research centres is not solely to recommend action. Researchers, even in think tanks, are more often than not influential by their capacity to help decisions makers understand a situation or problem than by attempting to inform or inspire a particular course of action.

Setting the media agenda or focusing policymakers attention on an issue of public interest is a crucial function of think tanks. Any attempt to understand uptake then needs to consider think tanks' alternative, and important, functions: to set the agenda, to

help explain a problem, to popularise ideas, educate the elites, create and maintain spaces of debate and deliberation, develop critical thinking capacities, audit' public and public institutions, etc.

Dismissal is 'uptake' too

Uptake is often equated with doing what the paper or study recommends. But, as I have argued many times before, research does not tell us what to do: only what is going on (or has been going on, or may be going on in the future). It can offer alternative courses of action and assess their effects and their own likelihood. But the choice is ours to make. Research tells one of my best and smartest friends that smoking is bad for his health; but still he chooses to smoke. Research suggests that girls who go to all-girl schools do better academically (particularly in the sciences) than their peers in co-ed schools, who may do better socially than those in all-girl schools; but what is better for them, social or academic skills, is a matter of choice for their parents and not researchers.

In both cases research is being 'used': it is considered alongside other 'evidence' (e.g. anecdotal: "I know many people who smoke and live to 100"; "I did well at uni even though I went to a co-ed school") and to appeals to tastes ("I like smoking"), tradition ("I went to that school"), values ("I do not believe in exclusive education"), etc.

Researchers, and their funders, need to understand that by playing that particular role (to provide evidence) they have given up (in a way only -they are still citizens and have a right and

responsibility to participate in politics) the right to make the final choices. They cannot decide for smokers or other parents -for obvious reasons- but they also can't decide for politicians. If they wanted to, then they should stand for office, campaign, sue the state, etc. But they should not expect that their research work alone, and their credibility, if they have it, ought to be enough.

The case for research informing (and only informing) policy has been made by Emma Broadbent, Kirsty Newman and Andries du Toit. More recently, former UP Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott has criticised the Labour Party's 'outsourcing of policy' to think tanks.

A little bit of 'uptake' is probably all you'll ever get
If we are honest, even if we do everything right, it is unlikely that our organisations will achieve more than just a bit of uptake. How much uptake is good enough? I wrote this some time ago: "According to Hans (Rothgiesser), Felipe Ortiz de Zevallos (FOZ, the founder of the Grupo Apoyo, quite the celebrity among Peruvian intellectuals and a Latin American think tank pioneer) had told him a few years ago when he was working for him, that: If you get 1 out of 5 right then you must be brilliant. If you get them all right it's probably because you are not being ambitious enough. So a few hits were 'pretty good'."

Too much 'uptake' should be worrying
Think thanks should be worried about having too much uptake; and funders should worry too. If a single organisation becomes so influential as to claim a high rate of success then questions

about undue influence over public issues is likely to arise. Think tanks and donors should encourage plurality and probably focus more attention on informing the debate than specific individuals or decisions.

What would the British, Indian or Argentinean public say if a single organisation claimed ownership for most of their government's policies? What would the British or American public say if these highly influential think tanks were foreign funded? They probably wouldn't like it.

Too much uptake, therefore, should be seen as a sign of a fragile political system. And this should be urgently addressed.

Uptake of bad research is not good

This is a personal observation but having worked with researchers in a number of countries and sectors I can say, with confidence, that not all the research being used by donors, NGOs, governments, and think tanks is good enough. For the most part I get the impression that research undertaken by the Aid industry is quite expensive but not necessarily better than what is done in more modest yet highly skilled national research institutes. It is also quite irrelevant to the realities of developing countries.

This is compounded by the fact that, unfortunately, research undertaken in the least developed countries and certainly in countries with poor tertiary education systems is, on average, sub-standard. The very best researchers in these places have already been snapped up by international organisations and

public bodies like the central banks. Think tanks there have been left with the second or third best.

Still, international development funders and NGOs use them (sub-contract them) to undertake research and influence policy. They often base their own decisions on research done by a single organisation rather than comparing multiple sources.

Funders should be careful about asking for uptake unless they are certain that the research undertaken by their grantees or sub-contractors is of the highest quality. And think tanks themselves should be careful that their work is of the highest standards. Quality is their best line of defence against accusations of bias, lobbying, and self-interest.

'Uptake' should be good only when the process is traceable
Put the last two points together and we can conclude that good uptake happens when good ideas, practices, and people are incorporated into a replicable and observable decision making process. What we want are good decision making capacities and not just good decisions. The latter, without the former, could be nothing more than luck. And in that context, bad decisions are as likely, if not more, than good ones.

From Herodotus' Histories: "In my experience, nothing is more advantageous than good planning. I mean, even if a set-back happens, that doesn't alter the fact that the plan was sound; it's just that the plan was defeated by chance. However, if someone who hasn't laid his plans properly is attended by fortune, he may

have had a stroke of luck, but that doesn't alter the fact that his plan was unsound."

Bad decisions we can live with (it's part of the democratic process); but bad decision-making processes are unacceptable. And worse still is keeping these decision-making processes out of sight. How else can the citizens of a country hold their politicians and civil servants to account if influence happens behind closed doors and policy is discussed in terms that exclude the majority of the population? More worrying still is when those involved in the decision-making process are paid-for foreign consultants and 'think tanks' -entirely unaccountable and free from the consequences of their advice.

Think tank funding in developing countries is laden with objectives for policy change set by civil servants, activists and politicians in developed countries. People who have not had to defend their ideas in public nor have been elected by the people of the countries where they seek influence. Before accepting funds, think tanks ought be know what these funds are intended for.

Contribution is as hard to measure as attribution
I find the idea (often voiced by many in the sector) that one is able to measure the contribution (not attribution) of a single piece of work to a policy decision, programme or project difficult to accept. If we accept that attribution is impossible to measure (unless the decision is made on the basis of a consultancy, maybe) then contribution (a share or proportion of attribution) should be equally hard to measure. But more importantly, in

every situation (in politics, business, family life, etc.) the ultimate decision maker, to whom we could attribute responsibility, is who makes the final and definitive choice: the choice to ask, to listen, to consider, to use, to believe, to trust, etc.

Surely, think tanks can say that they played 'a role' but little else beyond that. The story of change produced for the benefit of its funders should only conclude: "Think tank ABC played a role in policy XYZ: it produced timely research, of good quality, and made it available to those making the decisions; for example in these ways. Its work has been acknowledge and is appreciated." If, instead, the story claims that think tank ABC influenced policy XYZ.. well, nobody likes a showoff; specially a dishonest one.

Uptake happens both ways

My main critique to the division of producers, users and intermediaries of research is that it assumes that there is a separation between these different actors. This discussion has reminded me of a blog I wrote over a year ago about the role of intelligence services. Gregory Treverton (director of the Rand Corporation's Center for Global Risk and Security) wrote: "Intelligence is about creating and adjusting stories –this view has crystallised during my career as a producer and consumer of intelligence."

In practice, what happens is that ideas flow between people not papers (the Policy Brief, the Blog, etc. are simple tools). Also from Gregory Treverton: "At the National Intelligence Council, I came to think that, for all the technology, strategic analysis was best done in person. I came to think that our real product weren't those papers, the NIEs (National Intelligence Estimates). Rather

they were the NIOs, the National Intelligence Officers–the experts, not the papers... If policymakers ask for a paper, what they get will inevitably be 60 degrees off the target. In 20 minutes, though, the intelligence officers can sharpen the question, and the policy official can calibrate the expertise of the analyst. In that conversation, the intelligence analysts can offer advice; they don't need to be as tightly restricted as they are on papers by the "thou shalt not traffic in policy' edict. Expectations can be calibrated on both sides of the conversation. And the result might even be better policy."

There are no Nobel Prize winners for work done last year
Nobel Prizes (probably with the exception of the Peace Prize) are awarded for work done years, if not decades, ago. Ideas need time to mature, be tested, replicated, adopted, adapted, popularised, forgotten, rediscovered, etc. The real contribution of a body of research can only be judged in hindsight.

It is arrogant to think otherwise. User fees, import substitution, cash transfers, the green revolution, private pension funds, the list goes on and on, are all ideas that are still there, ticking along, some popular some not anymore. But their effect will only be known when all the dust has settled and we are able to assess their overall contribution.

I could claim success for having popularised the RAPID Outcome Mapping Approach among some think tanks, research projects and donors but, if I am honest, I should also say that I am not sure if the approach is any good. It makes sense and it can help but at the same time, I've seen it used to avoid proper

planning and harder-to-make organisational reforms. It is too early and for me; the jury is still out.

It takes time to really understand the contribution that an idea makes because the relationship between ideas and decisions is not linear nor clear of any other influences. Ideas come out of, are supported by, explained in relation to, and adopted in conjunction to other ideas. And decisions are made in the same complex manner: within other decisions. A policy to reduce fuel subsidies is made within a larger number of other decisions that may depend on entirely different policy processes, research communities, disciplines, political fights, etc. It may even come down to what the constitution says about subsidies.

Understanding all of this takes time and often has to be attempted after the event.
This is probably why Nobel Peace Prizes do not have the same reputation as the others. In recent years the award has gone to people and organisations for work they have just done or are doing instead to those with a much longer term history of struggle. Who knows what will happen with Obama, Johnson Sirleaf, or Aung San Suu Kyi (and certainly the EU)? They could still mess it all up; after all, they are in power, and power tends to corrupt.

One sparrow does not make a summer
Often the focus of research uptake evaluations is a research programme or project or even a single study. This is not surprising as funders tend to be themselves rather atomized and uncoordinated. The governance team funds research, the health

team funds research, and so does the education team. Then there are country offices, research departments, civil society funds, etc. And each one of these is further broken down: electoral reform in Kenya and accountability in Malawi, maternal health and child malnutrition, primary education and secondary education, etc.

So everyone is going around trying to assess the uptake of their own research. And why their research? Because it is likely that the funding was provided as a project with a business case that demands an assessment of value for money and impact of that project.

But instead of attempting to assess the uptake or the impact or the contribution of each and every piece of research, donors should attempt to look at the contribution (not measure it, just understand it) that all research or at least a substantial (in terms of density and consistency in time) body of research has had (when the dust settles, of course).

Not only is it expensive but also unreliable to judge the contribution of research by looking at single piece of work. It could have been luck, the policy may just as easily be over turned (it would not be the first time to see a new government changing the policies of the last one -in Latin America it is as if it was part of the swearing-in oath: "I swear to change the policies of the previous government"), new evidence may be just around the corner, etc. Equally, it would be unfair to judge a piece of work for its failure to influence policy: the political timing may be

wrong, economic concerns may force decision makers to delay a decision, etc.

It is also limiting in that it does not allow us to trace the many other ways in which research (the process) and research centres contribute to society: developing critical thinking capacity, refocusing efforts, improving the public debate, educating the elites, etc.

It all depends on the research policy regime

It is not the same to ask about the uptake of work that is commissioned and that of work that is unrequested. Surely, it would be quite a waste of time to go about evaluating whether a single consultancy was or wasn't used. A simple 15 minute interview with those involved may be enough. Unrequested research would be more interesting to study.

In a recent case study of think tanks in Europe conducted with Emma Broadbent she got a rather interesting quote from a highly respected think tank in the UK (non-Aid). It went something like this: "DFID does not know how to work with organisations it does not fund." When Harry Jones and I looked at DFID's use of the research and evaluations we found something that confirms this: staff there were more likely to use research and evaluations that they had commissioned themselves; even though all the research and evaluations in question had been funded by DFID. If the DFID study tells us anything is that the burden of uptake (and proof) ought to be on those who should be taking it and not those (mainly) providing it.

This is why I am not too keen on spending too much money attempting to communicate impact evaluations or RCTs (or evaluating their uptake). It would be unlikely that these rather expensive studies would not been requested by the government or those who want to use the information.

It all depends on the research and the policy in question
It is also the case that uptake is highly dependent on the specific idea that we are dealing with and the policy (behaviours, processes, discourses, etc.) that the idea affects. Uptake on research related to the quality of the food rations provided in soup kitchens or school breakfast programmes may be easier to achieve than for research related to electoral reform. Is one more important than the other? The former may take little effort (sometimes) while the former may even cost the researchers their lives (sometimes). Should we only do popular (commissioned) research? Research with high likelihood of uptake? Surely the answer to this must be a clear No!

'Uptake' is, more often than not, opportunistic and a matter of luck
Since researchers do not control the political agenda and they certainly do not control the fluctuations of the economy, social conflicts, natural disasters, technological jumps, and other critical junctures, they do not control when their ideas may come into fashion, be needed or applicable.

Elections, earthquakes, financial crises, scandals, democratic 'revolutions', a hike in commodity prices, the introduction of the iPad, and the popularisation of Twitter, among other factors are

likely to explain the adoption of dormant ideas than anything else.

It all depends on others

Even if the research done is of high quality, is relevant, useful, etc.; if it has been communicated in the most appropriate way (The Taxi Driver Test.), in other words, even if everything that the think tank or the researchers can control is done well, uptake cannot be guarantees. Then uptake is really up to others and other factors. When the Republicans are in control of the Senate, Brookings gets called to provide evidence fewer times than when the Democratic Party is in control. It does not matter how much Brookings pays for the top researchers, or the attention it puts to its work, how it is presented, etc. In the end, what matters is that the Republicans think Brookings is a liberal institution and therefore does not share the core believes and principles of their Party.

So when funders look at the uptake of their grantees' research they should probably be paying more attention to their grantees audiences and 'competitors' in the policy community (which include other social, economic and political actors such as NGOs, professional bodies, grassroots, the media, lobbies, etc: they ll have roles to play) than to their grantees (if, and only if, their grantees are doing all they can do right: it makes no sense at all to be looking for uptake if the research is of poor quality or if was poorly communicated.) So:

For the think tanks: Do you have a plan? is it sound? was it properly delivered?

For the audiences: Did you use the research (the body of research, the ideas, etc... not the single paper)? Why? Finding out why? is where things get really interesting. Last year, working in Serbia, a policymaker with a background in research and great contacts with researchers and think tanks told me that often what think tanks do not understand is that the reason why their recommendations do not get adopted is not that policymakers did not think they were good ideas but because the policymaking rules and processes that govern them (the bureaucracy) have the power to kill any idea: good or bad. Organisations have this incredible capacity to deal with disruptive ideas in the same way that a body deals with an infection or an allergen. Their structure, regulations, rules, and cultures are there to protect them from change.

So the reasons why an idea is adopted or not (by politicians, civil servants, other researchers, journalists, lobbyists, NGOs, the public, etc.) can range from: the level of capacity (personal and organisational) to understand and use it, interest and opportunity, overlap with personal experience, its opportunity cost, etc.

All of which means that if we want to really understand uptake we need to really understand the communities that we want to adopt the ideas we are tracking. Nothing short of an historial ethnographic study will do.

'Uptake' is a lot of things that do not have to be measured - but should be understood

In conclusion, uptake can be a lot of things depending on the organisation, its strategy and objectives, the context in which it works, the issues it deals with, the audiences it targets, etc. What matters most is that as many of the different contributions that think tanks can make are recognised, described, understood, and valued.

The problem is that if we recognise that the contribution of research can happen in such a broad range of ways, over time, and unexpectedly, measuring it becomes an almost impossible task. Being certain that, even if adding caveats such as 'may have' or 'is likely to', X influenced Y is not only sloppy research but also dishonest. What a think tank can do is answer for its own actions: research quality, communications capacity, etc. Similarly, funders can make sure that their funding is provided in the most appropriate way.

But beyond that, it is all guess-work.

If you are not sure of the return, don't invest This is a bit of an afterthought point. Something that has caught my attention over the years is that the Aid Industry is the only industry in the world where the investor first invests and only then asks about the rate of return (this is also the only industry where competitors are allowed and encouraged to partner when bidding for public contracts!).

Research funders have no problem allocating hundreds of millions of dollars, euros and pounds to increasingly large

research programmes without proper consideration of the absorptive capacity of the research communities they are targeting (which leads to hugely inflated and unsustainable salaries) or the expected return on their investment. Instead they ask the organisations they have just handed out millions to demonstrate, ex-post, that they knew what they are doing. It is as if a FTSE100 corporation invested in or signed a large contract with a company in Ghana without having visited it once, checked their books, assessed the capacity of its staff, evaluated their work so far, and considered its capacity to take on the additional work implied in the new investment or contract.

For most donors a simple proposal will do. Maybe an interview to discuss the project will be added to the process but that is just about it. Hundreds of millions are awarded in this way. And in the end, the burden falls on the recipients to demonstrate that the projects they have been contracted to implement will in fact deliver their objectives (projects, mind you, that have often been designed by the funders and not by the recipients of the funds - supposedly to avoid conflicts of interest). If you ask me, it makes little sense.

Funders ought to make the case for research to whoever they have to make it and only then go on to fund. Think tanks should be expected to do good and relevant research and to communicate it well and appropriately; but not to justify their existence. If their funders do not like them any more or do not think they are useful or valuable to the societies and communities where they work, then they should stop funding them and that should be it. This is a right they have -and in fact it

ought to be their responsibility to make up their minds about this. But they will have to explain why.

Funders like DFID, AusAid, IDRC, Gates, Ford, the Open Society Foundations, etc. clearly value research and the recognise the positive contribution that think tanks can make to a society. They would not be funding them if they didn't and they can see the positive effects it has in the societies from where they have found inspiration to invest in think tanks. They should, and some are beginning to, focus their attention on quality and pay less attention to whether or not they have an impact.

Appendix

Just a scan away!

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 25 September 2015

Called to Transformation (WCC): Ecumenical Diakonia 2022

English

Sinhala

Tamil

Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes - *New WCC Affirmation on Mission and Evangelism, Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME)* **The new statement presented to the WCC 10th Assembly at Busan, Republic of Korea in 2013**

200 Years of Lamentation of the Malayaha Makkal in Sri Lanka: SOLUTIONS, 2024

English	Sinhala	Tamil

Verite' Research – Hill Country Tamils of Sri Lanka; *Towards Meaningful Citizenship* **(2019)**

dialogue, Religions, Economic Justice and the Environment, EISD, Vols XLIII 2015-2016

STATE OF THE EVIDENCE IN RELIGIONS AND DEVELOPMENT (JLIFLC) 2022

Sinhala   **Tamil**

Chapter 1
(Religion and Development)

Chapter 2
(Religion and Health)

Chapter 3
(Religion and the Environment)

Sinhala   **Tamil**

Chapter 4
(Faith actors and violence
Against children)

Chapter 5
(Religion, Development and
Gender)

Chapter 6
(Religions, Peace and Conflict)

Sinhala   **Tamil**

**Chapter 7
(Religions and Forced Migration)**

CIEF - COURSE PACK – Training on Evidence Based Religious Engagement and Development (2024)

I wish to place on record my appreciation for all the translators who supported this project – Rev. Andrew Devadason

- *English to Sinhala*

(Main) Ms. Vishmee Warnachapa (vishmeewarnachapa@gmail.com)
(Supportive)
Rev. Upul Fernando (upulchamila@gmail.com)
Rev. Hashan De Mel (hashan91d@gmail.com)

- *English to Tamil*

(Main) Ms. Medoline David (medolinjgraj@gmail.com)
Mr. Premkumar (sgprem010757@gmail.com)
(Supportive) Rev. Ruben Pradeep (rprubenpradeep@gmail.com)
Formatting Assistance– Mr. Adrian Selvadurai (adrian.selvadurai@gmail.com) Ms. Y. Rebecca Benjamin (rebeccayeman9@gmail.com)

The 06th One

Transcendence

A Sri Lankan proposal to an addition to the 05 Marks of the Mission in the Anglican Communion

To engage with people of diverse faiths and ideologies and to discern God's presence among them" in order that the communities that make up our Anglican Family may be challenged to even more faithfully reflect the Mind of Christ and the values of the Reign of God by being more inclusive in our outlook and planning and implementing